Issue 29, June 1983

Different Worlds

THE MAGAZINE FOR ADVENTURE ROLE-PLAYERS

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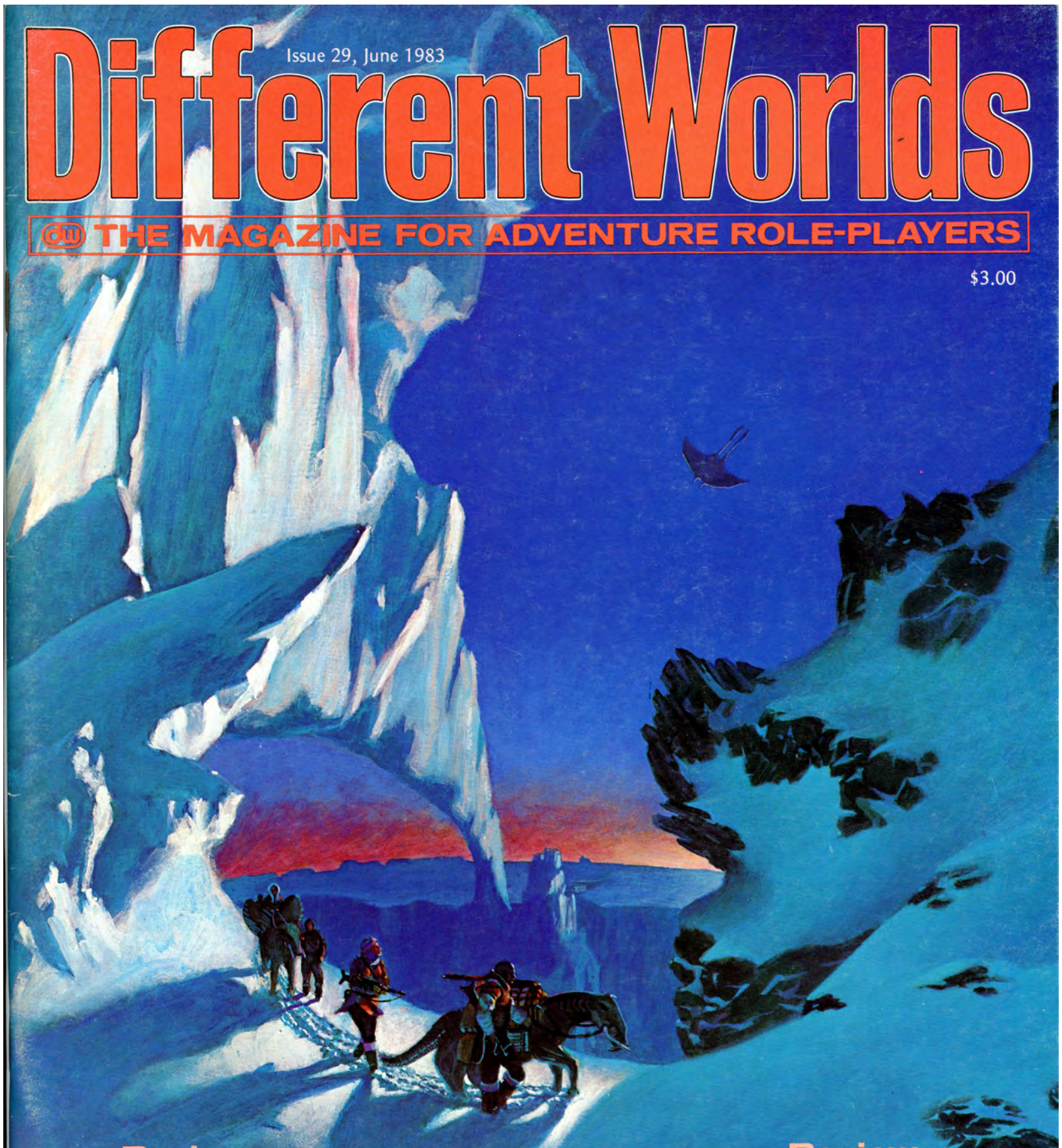

Review:
Star Frontiers

Review:
Return of the Jedi

World-building and Campaign Creation

Different Views

Comments about DW, this column, or the role-playing hobby, should be sent to: Different Views, PO Box 6302, Albany, CA 94706-0302.

Meso-American Culture

After reading *DW-27* my wife and I couldn't believe our eyes. I have tried for a long time now to get other cultures recognized as viable sources for fantasy role-playing games. My own campaign is made up of players who work on the TSR design staff, as well as other very talented role-players. All of them have been exposed to various pre-Columbian Meso-American nations and enjoyed each and every encounter.

We should mention that I have lectured on and taught Chicano Studies. I have lived and worked with the Tlaxcala Indians in Mexico. I also wrote the Mechica module, based loosely on the Mexica or Aztec culture, for issue 70 of The Dragon magazine. My wife was also a student of Chicano Studies while in college. We were able to pick out certain errors in Ernest Hogan's "Dressed for a Flowery Death" article. But our overwhelming feeling was one of pride of what we are. Most of all, it is good to know that our heritage is now a recognized source for gamers to expand their worlds. We are pleased that the tonali of Mr. Hogan, and *DW*, has crossed ours'.

Gali Ricardo Sanchez
Susie Ruiz-Sanchez
Lake Geneva, WI

Intriguing Views

I must admit that issue 28's "Different Views" was one of the most intriguing I have read in some time, primarily because it was April. C'mon now, Matt Warren cannot really be that angry about Greg Stafford's attitude towards Gloranthan dwarfs, can he? Distasteful it was, but if an author cannot write about his own world, who can? I expect that Matt was wanting to see an article about Tolkien dwarfs, and was dismayed at finding something wholly original instead.

And Stafford recommending *T&T*? That has to be an April Fools joke! Let's face it, gaming is a savage business and not for panty-waists. Just last week, we had to beat off an attack by FGU. They had entered the office through the heating duct and were attempting to scramble our computer files when the pseudo-dragons got them.

Seriously now, there are several points to make about the rest of the issue. Sapienza's article about dragons was complete except for providing a reason to have PC dragons in the first place. Either that, or there is some confusion over the intent of the article. One solution could be to match PC dragons against very powerful creatures in a quest. Dragons are too big for dungeons, they cannot fit into castles, and they won't be fighting in bars.

The "Gwaefir" article was interesting. Is this derived from mythological sources, or is this new? Also, I would expect them to have an over-developed chest, to accommodate their massive wing-span and body weight.

Mike Kelly's piece on violence in role-playing was excellent. He accurately touched upon the reasons why violence is encouraged: it's easy to run and too easy to survive. Most campaigns suffer from this overkill, and gamemasters should realize that a single death – or the threat of one – is more effective than mass slaughter, when you want to emphasize danger in a campaign. After Gandalf died in *Lord of the Rings*, the tension increased many times over, because if a powerful wizard (and compelling character) can die like that, who is safe?

Another point to consider if you want to limit violence can be drawn from reality, and that is social pressure. War is chaos; it disrupts civilization, commerce, agriculture, the arts, in addition to wasting money and lives. On a smaller level, we have seen what effect violence has on our lives. Women and the elderly dare not walk alone on the streets; we buy handguns to protect ourselves; we've gone so far as to fingerprint children, just in case they disappear while walking to school.

In a fantasy campaign, this translates into the city watch. Citizens should be more willing to interfere in a robbery or fight. In certain campaigns the wearing of weapons may be banned. Also characters well known for causing trouble may find it difficult to get information, help, money or hirelings. They may even be asked to move along to the next town.

Finally, the attraction violence has on us is that it is clear-cut. Interacting with others is not precise, and there are a lot of questions to be asked. Is this person telling the truth? There is no need for thought when the same person is swinging a sword at you. Self-defense is a morally safe position we can all live with.

As a final note: there are some errors in the "Quick Plugs" listing for Entertainment Concepts, Inc. *The Plateau, Search for the Lost City,* and *Search for the Crystal Sword* all cost $3.50 not $2.50. Also, the *Lost City* modulette was written by Jim Graham, not Jim Dutton.

William Peschel
Charlotte, NC

Dear Gigi,

Our mutual admiration society is being badly strained by these public importunities and innuendos of marriage. My enthusiasm for your talents remains undiminished, but I have no intention of marrying you. Can't we just be good friends?

John T Sapienza, Jr
Washington, DC

To Whom It May Concern

(The following letter was received by the Chaosium.)

My name is Andy Abbett and I'm 14 years old. I'm writing this letter to ask a very important question. Why did you take out the Cthulhu Mythos and the Melnibonean Mythos from the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragon's Deities & Demigods* book?

I'm very upset about this matter due to the fact that I'm a very big fan of the Melnibonean Mythos. I have read all six books of the Elric of Melnibone Saga written by Michael Moorcock. These books are in chronological order as follows: *Elric of Melnibone, The Sailor on the Seas of Fate, The Weird of the White wolf, The Vanishing Tower, The Bane of the Black Sword,* and *Stormbringer.*

I'm also upset because before I got the chance to buy the *AD&D's Deities & Demigods* book with the Cthulhu and Melnibonean Mythos in it, you took them out of the book.

So my question boils down to this: why did you take the Cthulhu and Melnibonean Mythos out of *AD&D*?

Also, if you have any copies of the *AD&D's Deities & Demigods* book with the Cthulhu and Melnibonean Mythos, I would be very interested in purchasing one.

Andy Abbett
Antioch, CA

Dear Andy,

Thank you for writing to Chaosium Inc. with your comments of concern. I can appreciate your consternation.

However, I am afraid you are writing to the wrong people. We do not publish *Deities & Demigods,* TSR Hobbies does. We have no control over their editorial policies, and we did not take the Cthulhu and Melnibonean material out of their books. In fact, we have a contract which allows them to use the material in their books and so it is as big a mystery to me as it is to you. Perhaps you should write them and ask, then you could share the answer with me also.

We do not stock copies of TSR's books, and so cannot supply you with them. However, we do publish complete and excellent games on both subjects which you may find useful and entertaining. For your convenience we have enclosed a copy of our current catalog.

Greg Stafford
Albany, CA

No More Advanced Advertising

I have no complaints, only praise for *Different Worlds.* Any article that I am not personally interested in, I can generally see the value of it to someone else. I have a complaint about your publisher and a major advertiser, Chaosium, Inc. Now this problem is shared by the other major game design houses, but as I play *RuneQuest* this complaint is addressed to *DW*. My problem is with advanced advertising.

It is no fun to see something advertised only to find out while looking for it in various game stores that it is not out yet. Two recent examples are *Trollpak* and *Pavis*. Chaosium is even worse with their catalog mailers. I have a friend running a local game shop who finds it extremely annoying to disappoint customers because of advertising he has no control over. We are desperately waiting for your new products, so don't advertise them as available until they are in your warehouse or on the way to the distributors. By the way I am not against a What is in the Works column for various companies being listed, only that dates should not be given as our hobby is notorious for being late.

Peter Newallis
Kansas City MO □

Editorial

Departure

I must announce, with regret, that I will no longer be assembling *Different Worlds*. While I join the Chaosium staff, the task of producing *DW* will return to Tadashi.

The greatest thrill of my job was seeing the special issues come together. As the different articles, interior illustrations, columns, reviews, and cover trickled in there were always the stragglers that had to be worried about. In that respect *DW*-23, the Special Superhero issue was probably the most satisfying. Every gaming company, author and artist asked to be involved did their part to make that issue successful.

It was always a pleasure to work with all of you who contributed articles and artwork, and it was especially satisfying to receive unsolicited material that fitted into planned issues perfectly.

Working on *Different Worlds* has been an ongoing learning experience for me. It was very fulfilling to watch *DW* develop in format and content. Hopefully, you have enjoyed all the results.

I am confident that this magazine will continue to grow and keep your interest for many years and I would like to thank you for all the support that you have given us by reading *Different Worlds*.

Featured Next Issue:
The Teen Titans for *V&V*, *Champions* and *Superworld*.

Different Worlds

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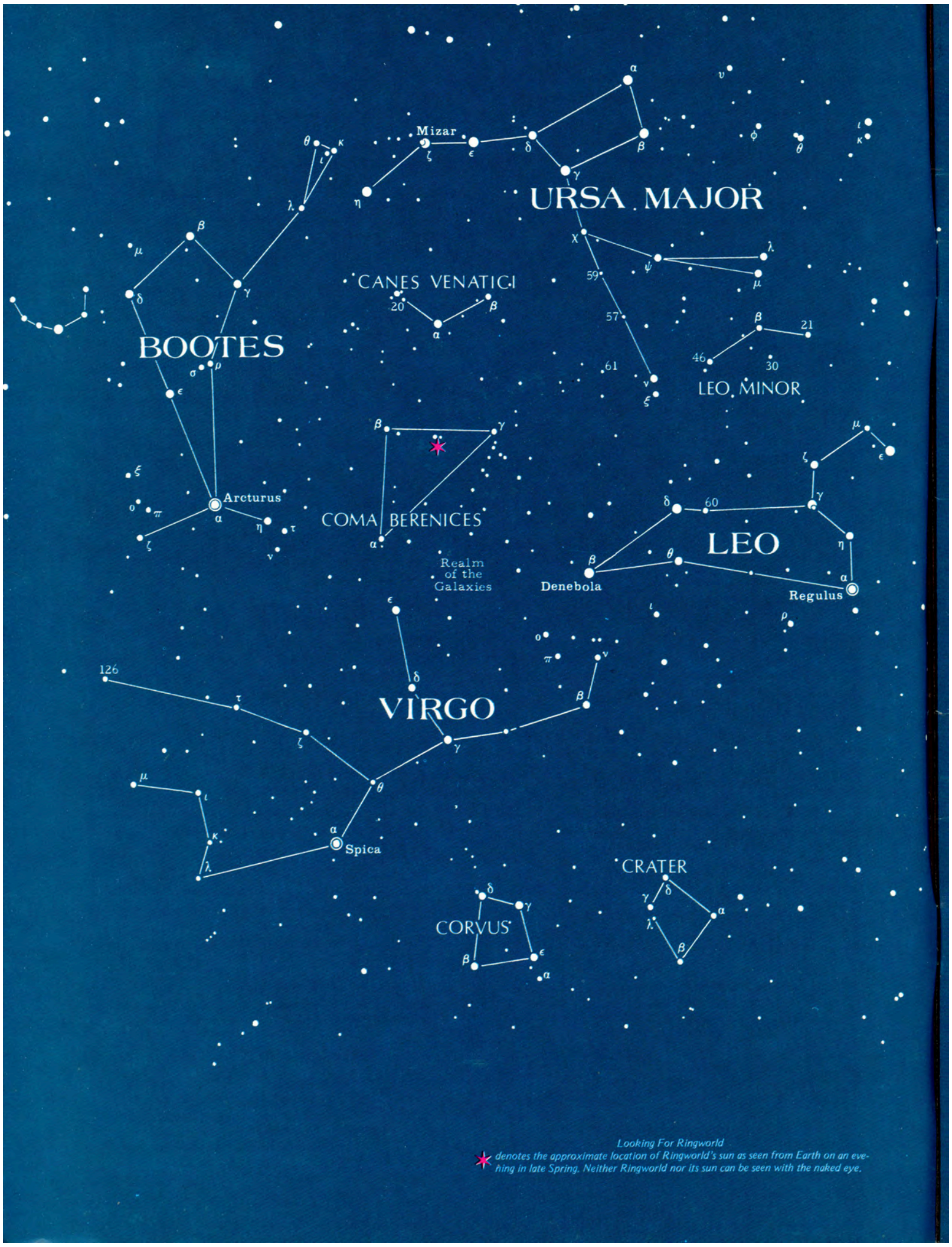
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CANES VENATICI
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COMA BERENICES
LEO MINOR
LEO
Denebola
Regulus
Realm
of the
Galaxies
VIRGO
Spica
CRATER
CORVUS
Looking For Ringworld
denotes the approximate location of Ringworld's sun as seen from Earth on an evening in late Spring. Neither Ringworld nor its sun can be seen with the naked eye.

RINGWORLD PREVIEW

THE ULTIMATE SCIENCE-FICTION ROLE-PLAYING WORLD

***Ringworld*, meticulously recreating the universe of Larry Niven's award-winning epic novels, is the first Known Space science-fiction role-playing game.**

by John Hewitt

We live in an archaic era – pre-fusion, almost pre-atomic. All of humanity exists within a fragile film of air, water and earth, confined to the crust of a single rocky-iron world. Robot reconnaissance of five other planets in the Solar System has barely begun, grudgingly funded. A few very expensive expeditions have touched the surface of the Moon.

In the early 1980's, though, we have seen tantalizing hints of things to come: a radical new picture of the early cosmos, the first cross-species gene-tailoring in mammals, new success with frozen-sleep techniques, major steps in the development of clean fusion power (and other energy sources), breakthroughs in communication with dolphins via computer-synthesized sound, mind-computer links and voice-box interfaces. The first artificial heart implant sustained a man's life for almost four months, and effective anti-rejection serums have been found for organ transplants. The decade has seen experiments with energy beam weapons, efforts to detect magnetic monopoles and solar neutrinos, new theories on the origin of primordial life by Orgel, Dyson and others, suggestions of cataclysmic events at the galactic nucleus, and the Space Telescope's possible discovery of planets orbiting three of the nearest stars . . .

As any mildly-sentient reader of science fiction surely knows, the foregoing events are all a mere logical prelude – a necessary foundation for the wildly imaginative future-history of Known Space elucidated in the works of Hugo and Nebula Award-winning author Larry Niven. The *Ringworld* game, due out from Chaosium this fall, draws faithfully from the novels and story collections in Niven's mythos, which include *Ringworld* (1970), *The Ringworld Engineers* (1980), *World of Ptavvs* (1966), *Protector* (1973), *A Gift from Earth* (1968), *Neutron Star* (1968), and *Tales of Known Space* (1975). The game text incorporates a wealth of new material based on conversations and correspondence with the author, on related stories, articles, essays and outlines, and other sources. The *Ringworld* game adds a new dimension to our understanding of human destiny – and the coming explorations of Ringworld may well hold the key to survival of all the Known Space civilizations.

Larry Niven often emphasizes the interplay between technology, human culture and human nature. His detailed vision of the next thousand years encompasses the near-future harnessing of fusion energy, the social consequences of organ banks and genetic engineering, the recognition of cetacean intelligence, the emergence of world government, the settlement of the asteroid belt, the founding of the first interstellar colonies, the tailoring of boosterspice, initial contacts with aliens, the Man-Kzin Wars, the purchase of the quantum shunt design from Outsider merchants, and the enormous influence of Pierson's Puppeteers on Known Space species. The Known Space series culminates in the discovery of the immense artifact Ringworld, over 200 lightyears from Earth, whose origins are still shrouded in deepest mystery.

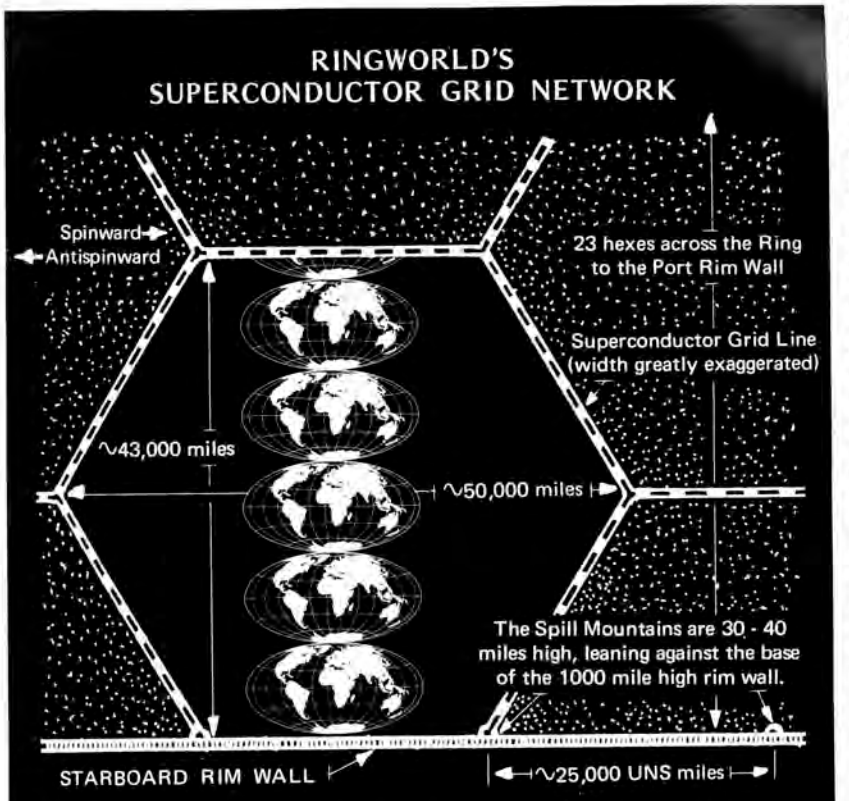
The authors' intentions in *Ringworld* are to set the stage for epic Known Space adventures in the high-spirited style of Louis Wu and Beowulf Shaeffer. The players will most often be human characters – flatlanders, Jinxians, Belters, spindly Crashlanders, Canyonites, Wunderland aristocrats and the like – but provision has been made for playing certain aliens as well as Ringworld natives. Those already running Known Space campaigns with other role-playing systems should find Chaosium's *Ringworld* an indispensable resource for its flavor, scope and detail. For those who have not yet experienced role-playing adventure games, *Ringworld* is an excellent introduction based on a popular, well-established future history. Science-fiction readers should find the text of the game a significant addition to the Known Space universe.

The expeditions to Ringworld begin in the late 29th century. By this time there are a dozen major human colony worlds, including Jinx, Wunderland, We Made It, Plateau, Home and Down. The most distant from Earth is Silver-eyes, 21.3 lightyears from Sol. In even more remote star systems a number of bases and settlements exist – but less than one percent of humanity's total has ventured beyond our central cluster of worlds. Known Space is a larger bubble which contains human space as well as the planets of several alien civilizations.

Ringworld Sampler

Colorful, banded egg-shaped Jinx is one of the oldest of the human colonies. Archetypal heavy-planet dwellers, Jinxians are compactly constructed and strong enough to teach tact to an armed Kzin. Their world is populous and heavily industrialized. Jinx is a memorable creation, and in Niven's stories one of the most thoroughly described. In the *Ringworld* players manual, the tradition continues.

The capital of Jinx is Sirius Mater (Jinxians have a reputation as punsters). It is on the Eastern continent, three thousand miles from the ocean, in a rich triangle of cultivated parkland at the fork of two major rivers. Sirius Mater has over seventeen million permanent residents. The air pressure and the gravity are uncomfortable for non-Jinxians, and the ultraviolet from Sirius A can be hazardous on especially clear days. The looming orange vastness of Binary can be disturbing, giving one the feeling that it may fall on Jinx at any moment. Extreme



Ringworld is 997,000 miles wide, 597 million miles in circumference. On the scale of the diagram, the Port Rim Wall would lie five feet above the center of the page.

A network of massive superconductor conduits buried in the structural scrith floor of Ringworld traces out a pattern of hexagonal areas on the surface of the Ring – the superconductor grid. There are 376,160 such hexagonal areas in all, 23 across the width of the Ring and 15,920 around a circumferential great circle. In some regions, Ringworld natives possess maps based on these hexes. Such maps were once made by City Builders, using magnetic compasses to follow the grid lines. At (or near) the vertices of these hexes there may sometimes be found solar-thermo-electric power receiver stations, climate-control stations, Maglev transit system focal points, etc.

Each of the major hexagonal areas in itself is huge – 1.6 billion square miles, or roughly eight times the total surface of the Earth. The major and minor widths of each hex are approximately 50,000 by 43,000 miles, and each of the six sides is approximately 25,000 miles long. Across the shortest (minor) width of a hex, roughly 5.4 Earth-diameters would stretch, 125 across the entire width of the Ring.

Along the rim walls the superconductor grid network ties into the Spill Mountains in a regular fashion: two out of three Spill Mountains hook into the converging conduits as well as the major circumferential line buried along the base of each rim wall. The Spill Mountains are spaced at intervals of slightly less than one minute of arc around both rim walls. On the Earth, one minute of arc on a great circle is a little over one mile.

Diagram by John Hewitt and Yurek Chodak. Map was adapted from **Rediscovery of the Earth,** *edited by Lloyd Motz, PHD, Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1979.*

temperature changes during the long days and nights are an additional annoyance.

Jinx's 1.78 gees have always discouraged elegance and ingenuity in architectural design. Massive, squat structures have been the dominant form – though the recently rebuilt Camelot Hotel, crowned by its famous Camelot Bar, is one of the tallest buildings in Known Space. Many off-worlders stay in the Camelot for its one-gee generated gravity throughout, and for convenient access to the neighboring Institute of Knowledge, the finest museum and research complex in human space. The Institute was originally founded to study the gigantic sentient white slug-like Bandersnatchi first encountered by early colonists along Jinx's inhospitable ocean shorelines, where they have browsed since the days of the Slaver Empire.

High-gravity agriculture and animal husbandry have always made Jinx's food exports quite exotic. Jinxian sausage is a delicacy found in the automatic kitchens of most spacecraft. Heavy manufacturing has helped keep the world's economy powerful, even during the worst stockmarket reversals. Though General Products maintained a regional facility in Sirius Mater, one of the most formidable human warliners, the Jinxian Battlecruiser, did not rely on a GP Hull. The East End of Jinx is similar to any heavily-industrialized moon, with its distilleries and many other vacuum enterprises. The West Band and West (or Farside) End are sparsely populated and far less civilized than the regions facing Binary. The West Band has not entirely outgrown its reputation as a safe haven for outlaws, smugglers and pirates. The organ bank problem was never an important social factor on Jinx; there was too much empty land for felons to flee to – and the Jinxian dueling tradition (settling affairs of honor with light sonic stunners) seems to reflect a tacit admiration for the misfits and adventurers of those early days. The West End, often bathed only in the vivid blue moonlight of Sirius B, is the site of Jinx's big Farside End Spaceport.

The importance of the Institute of Knowledge in the history of Known Space cannot be overstressed. Boosterspice was genetically-tailored from ragweed RNA in an Institute-sponsored biological laboratory. Communication with Bandersnatchi, Tnuctipun language and technology, and Slaver artifacts in stasis have been the nearly exclusive provinces of the Institute. It has played a crucial role in studying, displaying, and popularizing the arts, sciences, and cultures of sentient alien species. Cosmological, gravitational, and hyperwave theoreticians everywhere have benefited incalculably from Institute-financed expeditions to neutron stars, protosuns, and collapsars. Helium II lifeforms (such as those on Sirius VIII) have been a particular specialty, and there are Institute Xenobiological Field Stations on many human colony worlds.

■ The following passage from the description of Canyon hints at the depth of new detail to be found in the Known Space Worlds section of the Players Manual. For nearly two decades, Louis Wu lived unobtrusively as a wirehead in the gash on Canyon – until he suddenly became part of the Hindmost's press-ganged crew, as told in *The Ringworld Engineers.*

Canyon is the second of seven planets in the system of p Eridani A, an orange-yellow K2 sun at the edge of human space 22 light years from Sol. Formerly a Kzinti world, it was annexed at the close of the Third Man-Kzin War (2559). Canyon is the gateway to the inner Eridani systems: e Eri, 40 Eri, and Epsilon Eridani, on the way to Earth. It marks the southernmost contour of Kzin space, and has been of tremendous strategic importance historically in enforcing the UN restrictions on Kzinti expansionism. Officially, the Patriarchy recognizes Earth's dominion, but privately most Kzinti regard Canyon as a foreign outpost within their territory. They still use the planet's Kzinti name – Warhead. In the time of Ringworld, few flatlanders emigrate to Canyon, but many find it a fascinating place to visit.

Canyon does not quite follow the usual rules for planets. The probability of finding a habitable planet in the p Eridani system had always been considered low – but Canyon is hardly an Earthlike world. It is small, not much bigger than Mars, with a diameter of 4795 miles. Its density is high enough, though, to produce a surface grav-

ity of 0.45 gee. The day is 27.1 hours long; and there is no moon. Canyon orbits its sun at a distance of 70.7 million miles in a year of 232 days (262 UNS days). The crust of the planet is a rich source of radioactives and high grade heavy-metal ores. In the cometary halo of the Canyon system, magnetic monopoles are abundant. There is a second star in the system, p Eridani B, several times fainter than Canyon's sun. The companion has a period of 480 UNS years, never approaching the inner system more closely than Pluto approaches Earth. P Eri B has two inhospitable planets of its own.

■ A golden age of peace and prosperity lasting two and a half centuries had seen the humanization and development of the Solar System. Colonies flourished on the isolated worlds of half a dozen nearby stars. On Earth, the worst social problems concerned organ banks and overpopulation — humanity had almost forgotten warfare. Then, in 2367, the Kzinti swept into the Centauri system to subjugate Wunderland for the Patriarchy.

In the *Ringworld* Players Manual, the fabulous aliens of Known Space also receive the extensive attention they so richly deserve. Among the topics explored are Outsider business ethics, Grog evolution, Trinoc reproduction and Pierin infrared vision. Naturally, though, the Kzinti and the Puppeteers are the meat and potatoes of any Known Space adventurer's diet.

"In challenging a Kzin, a simple scream of rage is sufficient. You scream and you leap."

— Speaker-To-Animals

The Kzinti are a race of fierce carnivorous bipeds, whose ancestors were large, catlike plains predators. Averaging nearly eight feet tall, the males may easily weigh a quarter of a tonne. Except for the ears and long, pink, rat-like tails, a thick coat of rich orange-red fur covers their superbly-muscled bodies. The exact coloring of the coat varies from Kzin to Kzin, while occasional yellow or white stripes and black markings on the face and torso help to identify individuals.

The odd multi-pointed ears can expand and spread like translucent pink Chinese parasols, or fold flat into depressions in the fur during combat. The human-looking eyes are round, with round yellow pupils. Kzinti mouths are full of sharp, needle-like teeth, useful for tearing into the fresh, blood-raw meat that is their preferred source of nutrition. The nose is broad and flattened, their sense of smell acute. A substantial cranial bulge renders the overall shape of the head nearly triangular.

Kzinti are thick all over: arms, legs, and yard-wide torso. Their straight legs are short in proportion to the rest of their bodies. The backs of their big, four-digit hands are furred, but their palms and fingers are covered with a tough, leathery black padding. Their fingertips conceal long, sharp claws, always kept polished to a deep, glossy black.

From a distance, Kzinti may resemble huge, fat, orange-tabby cats, but a closer look reveals that these are formidable and dangerous aliens. Their senses are unusually keen, their reflexes stunningly quick, and their tempers are usually short. Their pink tails lash restlessly whenever a human passes too close, and carefully-tended Kzinti claws are apt to slide out above black fingertips.

■ Following a thorough discussion of Kzinti upbringing, outlook, language, history, culture and codes of honor, the ordeal of Kzin telepaths is described.

Telepathy is not easy for a Kzin, physically or emotionally, for few are natural psionic adepts. Trained Kzinti telepaths are forced addicts of a drug which drives insane all but one-tenth of one percent who take it. The drug, a treated extract of *sthondat* lymph, must be administered by injection. The resulting condition is transitory but powerful. Once the drug takes effect, the telepath lapses into a relaxed hypnotic state — but anyone caught in his mental grip stiffens in convulsion, simultaneously experiencing a piercing headache.

Once common on Kzin warships, telepaths could read the minds of sentient beings in metal-hulled ships over a thousand miles distant. Fortunately they could not exert a Slaver-like telepathic compulsion. In the grip of a Kzin telepath, a human may lose consciousness and will always experience a throbbing post-telepathy headache. The ordeal is disgusting, painful, and exhausting for the telepath as well, who sleeps for most of his leisure hours. His matted, unkempt fur, and his bedraggled distraught appearance would be shameful for a Kzin of any other occupation. A telepath will take the drug only if ordered to do so, but his honor requires him to remind his commander of his ability, if necessary.

Presently encountered only in espionage, piracy, and so on, Kzin telepaths are rare in Known Space. They cannot be ordered to read the minds of herbivores. Often dazed and groggy, as if from lack of sleep, Kzin telepaths are easily identified.

■ In the Ringworld era, the four Man-Kzin Wars (and numerous major "incidents") are two centuries in the past. Humankind was extraordinarily lucky. The wars waged by the Patriarchy against the Pierin, the Kdatlyno, the Trinocs, the vanished race of Altair One, the Chunquen, and others delayed the Kzinti from zeroing in on Earth.

Kzin warships have always been impressive and formidable. The few presently existing are classed as police ships. At the height of their interstellar empire, a single dreadnought of the Imperial Conqueror class could have utterly destroyed the combined military resources of late 20th century Earth. Armaments included fusion bombs, strike missiles, antimissiles, laser cannon, microwave-disruptors, and induction-projectors. A fine example, maintained and guarded by the ARM, may be viewed in the Smithsonian's Armstrong Orbital Museum above Earth. From a distance, the battlecraft shows as an ominous foreboding crimson disk, like some baleful bloody eye. Up close it is a huge red sphere over 600 feet in diameter, with ugly dead-black and silver elements projecting at random. Lumpy ridges trace the division of the hull into eight regular longitudinal segments, each containing a major weapons system. Two large circles of painted green dots and commas indicate the ship's class and captain's name. Atop the sphere like a glowing ice-cap sits the main command and control dome. Two latitudinal belts of large hexagonal ports alternate with smaller, mirror-blue, crystalline laser domes. Hemispherical weapon-pods around the equator of the ship are actually detachable two-kzin Scream-of-Vengeance interceptors, 50 feet in diameter. An equal number outfitted for planetary attack are stowed just beneath them in the interior of the main hull. The nominal crew complement for the Imperial Conqueror was 512, plus a detachment of Conquest Warriors. Equipped with fusion powered gravity-polarizers, these dreadnoughts cruised at .8 lights with plenty of power left for maneuvering. An internal zero-gee field normally was maintained by acceleration shields, compensating for hard velocity build-ups and abrupt course changes. Though cabin-gravity generators have become commonplace in recent centuries, Kzinti warriors were expected to tolerate weightlessness, cramped quarters, and personal inconveninece. Usually the craft did not even spin for the comfort of the crew.

Currently the Patriarchy has only limited military capability. Though its fleets' Ripping-Fang cruisers and Merciless-Slayer-of-Cowards fighter craft look as fearsome as Kzinti warcraft ever have, treaties firmly restrict their weaponry and drive systems. Sale of used General Products hulls to the Patriarchy is prohibited.

■ The intelligent caution of Pierson's Puppeteers is proverbial. Though most of these manipulative, herbivorous, two-headed professional cowards have fled Known Space, their influence is still keenly felt in human affairs. Used General Products Hulls continue to appreciate in value. And recently, the Puppeteer Fleet-of-Worlds passed close by the Ringworld.

Puppeteers have a complex, beautifully-expressive language which cannot be imitated by single-throated aliens. In the company of their own kind, they much enjoy verbal socializing. Puppeteer conversation is a rich, alien music, seductive and surreal, with the timbre of flutes and clarinets predominating. Their two separate larynxes allow them to produce a marvelous variety of intonation — odd dissonant harmonics, clear single notes as pure as ruby laser light, or incredible orchestral bursts. Lost in thoughtful concentration, a whistling Puppeteer can rival a pipe organ. Their remarkable brain enables them to carry on two

independent conversations simultaneously, in two different languages if necessary.

Since humans cannot pronounce or even comprehend Puppeteers' true spoken names, the aliens often substitute fanciful ones; humans frequently ascribe them names from mythology or literature. Puppeteers sometimes choose the names of legendary centaurs. Puppeteers are naturally adept at learning the speech of others. Their command of accent, innuendo, intonation, and verbal color goes far beyond any mere mastery of grammar and vocabulary: language is a powerful, persuasive tool — and sometimes is the only practical one at hand. All the same, Puppeteers tend to overestimate the importance of communication to aliens who would act first and ask questions later.

When speaking to a human male, a Puppeteer's voice is a soft, thrilling contralto — a disarming, lovely woman's voice which conjures up visions of Cleopatra, Marilyn Monroe, and Lorelei Huntz rolled into one. The voice is coldly-calculated to achieve results; a masculine counterpart is often used when speaking to human females. In the Hero's Tongue, their mastery of the inflections of command and status give similar psychological advantage.

The finer nuances of human expression vanish from a Puppeteer's voice if he becomes badly upset. As he loses control of a situation, his tone may become emotionless, wintry-cool and mechanical, like a computer. This is a warning sign. The scream of a truly-terrified Puppeteer is the sound of a steam-calliope dying in agony.

■ The voyage from Sol System to Ringworld requires two years of quantum I hyperdrive travel. Few humans have ever made the journey. Since the UN still considers the very existence of the Ring top secret, the source of the following personal log entry must remain anonymous.

The panorama of the Ringworld's features unfolded in breathtaking detail as we descended toward the upper reaches of its atmosphere. The Ring became a luminous, parabolic Arch above us — and we lost all track of how the rim walls and ring floor merge together in a single, circular artifact. Below us, rapidly expanding, the surfaces of all the Earthlike worlds in a dozen galaxies seemed to spread out flat for us to behold. Swirled white cloud-decks resolved first, some bright enough to dazzle the eyes: soft blankets and churning storms, long parallel streamers, and diminutive, dappled woolly fleece. Then, outlines of topography began to appear — continents and oceans, huge mountain chains, lakes, valleys, networks of rivers and streams, endless flat plains, barren deserts, vast forests, snowfields, odd patches of regularly-textured terrain, and dully gleaming lands that looked disturbingly unnatural. The surface is more than fifty percent water, with a continuous sprinkling of small, shallow seas and larger oceans randomly but rather evenly distributed. Island archipelagos dot their faces, while their amazingly-convoluted shorelines display a striking variety of gulfs, bays, inlets, peninsulas, river deltas, natural harbors and wide sandy beaches. Sluggish, silt-laden rivers and extensive marshlands became visible, as well as colorful jungles and lush tropical rain forests . . .

It is easy to lose all perspective amid such an immense landscape. Ringworld has a surface area three million times larger than the Earth. One habitually tends to underestimate its sizes and distances. It is nearly impossible to recall that all the stunning, geographic splendor of the Ring did not evolve naturally — that every major topographic detail had once been planned, designed and molded into the ultrasolid scrith foundation of the Ringworld.

■ On Ringworld, over the aeons, a thousand sentient hominid species have evolved through natural and artificial selection. All are more or less distantly related to humanity through our ancient ancestor, the Pak breeder. The following passage is a brief excerpt from "Diversification of the Hominids," in the gamemaster's manual.

The rise and fall of technological civilizations has affected many species. Some races selectively bred others for specific purposes, forced them into poor habitats, or wiped them out completely. Ancient biological engineers are known to have altered entire species to adapt them to unusual environments. Created long ago by City Builder geneticists, the Spill Mountain Folk are a good example of an artificially-overspecialized race. Unintentional mutations frequently arose as a result of scientific, industrial, or military technology. There have been nuclear accidents — even limited atomic wars — in certain regions of Ringworld.

A number of species are relatively recent imports, brought back as cargo aboard City Builder ramships. Samplings of *homo sapiens* from Earth may very well have been among these, as well as nearly-human species like *h. neanderthalensis.* Over the past thousand years, castaways or adventurers from any of the starfaring civilizations of Known Space may have found their way to Ringworld.

■ The hominid species on Ringworld have taken advantage of many niches in the ecology left unfilled by the Ringworld Engineers. They run the gamut from nearly non-sentient predators to technologically-formidable, civilized sophisticates. The Ring is big enough for high culture, savagery, and anything in between. The gamemaster's manual takes a close look at two dozen hominid types, including the Grass Giants, the Ghouls, the Machine People, the City Builders, the Night Hunters, the Spill Mountain Folk, the Wind Walkers, and others. Brief excerpts follow from three of these.

The social structure of the Grass Giants is that of the herd — but they are far from docile plant-eaters.

The Grass Giants are a race of great, ferocious herbivores who live on the veldt. Over vast primitive grassland regions, their tribes have become undisputed masters of the flat and rolling plains. Their war parties march across the Ringworld savanna as if they owned it.

Grass Giants are as big as Kzinti — and just as brave. The males range between seven and eight feet tall, but the kings often reach nine feet. They are proportionally massive, powerfully built and confident. Their skin and eyes are brown. They have lots of coarse yellow hair, appearing not so much bearded as maned. Sometimes only their eyes and wide nose show through the mass of hair covering the face and spilling over their shoulders in a cascade. The jaws are huge and muscular; the mouth is full of large, flat-topped molars, all well worn down. Their arms are the size of any flatlander's leg, ending in broad-fingered hands. Grass Giant males often bear numerous scars, and some are remarkably disfigured. They wear only plates of thick leather armor to guard arms and torsos in combat. Their characteristic weapon is a heavy sword with a long curved blade, which doubles as a scythe. They also use a variety of bows, knives, lances, daggers, sabers, halberds and clubs. They seldom favor shields or defensive weapons.

The Grass Giant women are themselves imposing and dignified. Usually they are naked. Their pigmentation is identical to the males, and their golden hair falls down their backs to their thighs in a mass of tangles. The female giants stand six to seven feet tall, on the average. Their legs are thick, their feet large and hard. They have big, heavy breasts, and rarely wear jewelry, symbols or other decoration. Some of the female Grass Giants show the characteristic wrinkles and white hair of advanced age — but the males seldom live long enough. The ratio of females to males in a single tribe may be as high as five or ten to one.

■ Some Ghouls communicate with dwellers in distant lands via a mysterious system of reflected-light signals — but most hominids are aware only of their other nocturnal activities.

Ghouls (or Night People) are widespread on Ringworld. Everywhere, their place in the ecology is very secure. These sentient nocturnal species are scavengers and morticians, carrion-eaters and bearers of information. They have mastered the domain of night — and few hominids ever care to compete for their realm of darkness.

From afar the Ghouls seem horrid supernatural things resembling a blend of human and jackal. In small, quiet packs they approach native camps on all fours to claim the day's refuse and garbage. Hunched and half-erect they move away at fair speeds, often carrying substantial burdens. In more civilized environments, they walk about perfectly upright on wide, flat feet, without fear, to bear away the bodies of the dead. In the rare instances when hominid cultures do begin to bury and cremate their dead, hordes of Ghouls attack the living to convince them of the error of their ways. Despite occasional tension, peace, toleration, and a sort of mutual respect almost always prevails. The Night People are generally

Ghoul by Lisa A. Free

diffident and unassuming in their relations with other species. They normally show no hunger for dominance and they seldom intrude. Indeed, they are scrupulous and thorough in their understanding of and compliance with the customs and religious practices of thousands of local cultures. Ghouls seem to have a fatalistic acceptance of their place in the scheme of things – feeling that "the activities of other species rarely interfere with our own lives, and in the end they all belong to us." The funeral customs of the Night People themselves are not known.

Ghouls are least frequently encountered in aquatic environments, wastelands, or other regions far from concentrations of land-dwelling hominids. They detest the habitats of Vampires. The Night People are small, seldom reaching five and a half feet. They usually have permanent mates, and frequently travel in pairs or family groups. Their bodies are almost entirely covered with thick iron-gray or black hair. Their skin is a cooked-liver blend of dark purple and charcoal. They have an unpleasant odor, and a foul stench of corruption often gives them the breath of a basilisk. Ghouls have wide mouths displaying a daunting expanse of sharp, wedge-shaped teeth designed for ripping. Their big, pointed goblin-ears come erect and alert when they listen intently or show apprehension. A Ghoul's hearing is quite sensitive – they gather information more by eavesdropping than by asking questions. Their night vision is excellent. Their eyes, not overly large, appear quite human with their chocolate-brown pupils. A sigle thick eyebrow traces an 'M' across the brow. The nose is flattened, knobbly but not very broad. The Night People have straight, shiny hair on their heads which most keep trimmed and traditionally combed. Male and female Ghouls alike usually wear a big purse or pouch on a shoulder-strap, and (except in cold climates) nothing else. The nails of their tapered fingers and gnarled toes are as sharp and tough as claws. Night People look and smell hideously repulsive, an offense to the sensibilities of many Ringworld natives. They do *rishathra*, but few hominids ever suggest it. Low-born City Builders are an exception: in some areas traditions demand their society's debts to the Ghouls be paid in periodic rishathra.

■ The Machine Empire began during the dark ages following the Fall of Cities. The Machine People know that their world is an immense ring – but they forbid such knowledge to their subject races.

The Machine People rule a mighty empire – a million square mile cluster of nearly-independent hominid kingdoms centered beneath an isolated floating city. Nearly as technologically advanced as mid 20th century Earth, the Machine People are limited by scarce natural resources and the plurality of their domain. They use alcohol and methane fuels, and must devote considerable effort to biomass agriculture, bulk transportation and chemical processing. Metals are rare, strip mining projects essential. In distant, ruined City Builder metropolises, major salvage projects are common. Outposts for trade and exploration march far into remote, savage lands.

The Machine Empire is gradually, arduously progressing toward high culture. Its citizens believe they have a special destiny as inheritors of civilization on Ringworld. Though they provide the remnant City Builder enclave a thousand feet overhead with much of its raw material and labor, Machine People feel the trade is mostly out of tradition, practicality, and old loyalties. The true power and sophistication of the City Builders' techniques, both political and technological, is largely unsuspected by those who dwell below. Any serious conflict between the two cultures would probably result in the destruction of both.

In regions where ad-hoc floating cities have been pieced together from disparate buildings with independently-operating power sources, respectable industrial civilizations have often developed. The Machine Empire is but a single example of this phenomenon – a tiny speck upon the vast habitable surface of the Ring.

The main authors of the *Ringworld* game are Paul Reiche III, Rudy Kraft, and John Hewitt. Paul, a Berkeley native "in heart and home," is a designer of board games, role-playing systems and advanced games for home computers. His efforts have seen publication by companies such as TSR Hobbies Inc., EPYX-Automated Simulations, and his own Fantasy Art Enterprises. Rudy Kraft is no stranger to Chaosium, or to role-playing games in general. His name appears on many fine products – including *Thieves' World*, *Griffin Mountain*, and *Borderlands*, as well as the computer game supplement *Danger at Drendisti*. John Hewitt, a native of Silvereyes, holds advanced degrees in hyperwave astrophysics, xenology and Known Space history from the Institute of Knowledge. He has written most of the text of the *Ringworld* game (including all sections excerpted in this article) and is responsible for its technical accuracy.

Besides the Chaosium staff, there are at least four artists involved in the project as well. Ralph McQuarrie (*Star Wars, Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, and other major credits too numerous to mention) has created an extraordinary cover. Illustrations of Ringworld hominids, flora and fauna, and creatures are the work of multi-talented Lisa A. Free. Drawings of technology items and Ringworld are being done by Michael Blum and Kevin Ramos. Chaosium's Lynn Willis is in charge of project continuity, game system revisions, play-testing, quality control, and first aid for blistered sensibilities. □

Building the Campaign: A Literary Model

by Ken Rolston

Whether you are a beginning gamemaster (GM) embarking on your first world design or an experienced universe-builder setting up your newest campaign it will help you to have an organizational model, a design checklist to help comprehensively address all the necessary components of a good fantasy role playing (FRP) campaign world.

Fortunately we have all received extensive instruction with a very useful model for this purpose, compliments of our public education system. I refer to the analytical tool labeled by English teachers as "the elements of fiction" – plot, character, setting, theme, and style. Fantasy role-playing has its roots in the literature of sword-and-sorcery and science-fiction, so it should not be surprising that knowing something about how fiction is designed will tell us how to design good fantasy role-playing campaigns.

If we extend our comparison, we can think of the short story as analogous to the FRP scenario, while the novel is similar to the FRP campaign. FRP campaigns usually have the same elements as series fiction, where a group of novels or short stories all take place in the same setting, often with the same characters and recurring themes. A gamemaster designing a campaign must go through most of the same creative preparations that a fiction writer goes through in writing series fiction.

SETTING

Of the five main design elements of fiction – plot, character, setting, theme, and style – the most important for FRP gaming is the setting. As in the fantasy and science-fiction antecedents of FRP gaming, the sojourn into another world is the principal attraction. It is essential that the atmosphere support the sense of wonder that fantasy readers and gamers yearn for. There are four types of source material that may be helpful in designing or selecting a setting for your campaign: published FRP campaign packs, and home-made backgrounds from either historical, literary, or home-designed materials.

Of these, the simplest to use are the published campaign packs. These materials have the virtue of being already organized for FRP play, and they have all been tested for their effectiveness as game materials. For the beginner, I believe it is a good idea to rely on the support of a published campaign setting at first; it saves a great deal of time and gives the new gamemaster a practical model for organizing and developing his own campaigns later. This also leaves the gamemaster free to work on the creation of narratives and characters – the critical elements for dramatic play in FRP sessions. While story and character development are relativel simple tasks, the design of a campaign world entails problems of such epic scale that they may boggle and intimidate even the most experienced gamemaster.

The next simplest to use source for FRP settings is literary material. For our discussion, this will include film and television narratives. Literary backgrounds are not very well organized for FRP play; it is very difficult to reference fiction for the specific details of setting, such as who was king in what year,or what climate can be expected in a given section of the world. The author may have prepared notes on such details before he wrote the story, but the art of fiction is concealing the detailed design of the background (often 90% of the labor of writing), creating instead the impression of a consistent world. However, literary materials, particularly science fiction and fantasy action-adventure fiction, are often excellent sources for characters and narratives. Even mainstream fiction can provide materials for FRP campaigns – I have used a number of story ideas and vivid characters from Joseph Wambaugh's police fiction and from the TV program *Hill Street Blues* – but this material will require translation to a fantasy or science-fiction context.

A third source of FRP campaign settings is real-world history. Historical materials can be easily referenced in encyclopedias or popular histories; the characters and events will have to be adapted to the SF or fantasy context, but the use of history will give a confident air of credibility to a campaign. Whether the players recognize the campaign's basis in the Napoleonic Wars or in Pizarro's conquests, there will be a coherent logic to the background that will be satisfying for the players and supportive for the GM.

Finally there is the most difficult kind of campaign design – the home grown campaign background. This requires the gamemaster to design the physical, sociological, and political elements of his campaign world from scratch. It is an incredibly difficult task; imposing even to professional writers. It is also perhaps the most ultimately rewarding; the pride of creation is felt by every gamemaster who has gone to the trouble to detail everything in his campaign from the geology to the theology.

Of course, most campaigns take something from each of these four sources. Even the most original worlds of fiction, such as Larry Niven's *Ring world* and Tolkien's Middle Earth, are based on historical and literary models. Most existing FRP campaigns owe a

German and English armor.

illustrations from The Complete Encyclopedia of Illustration

great deal to published FRP material and to other familiar privately-run campaigns. As a gamemaster becomes more experienced and ambitious, and is more familiar with the ways other gamemasters organize their campaign settings, the ultimate challenge becomes the production of an original universe. I recommend, however, that not too high a value be placed on the originality. Fantasy role-playing is a game, and for many the task of developing a detailed background is too great to permit enough time to play the game. For most gamemasters, I recommend keeping the amount of time put into the design of a universe proportional to the time spent playing in it; it is very discouraging to slave over a campaign background only to discover that you are never willing to open the universe to other players because you "still have a lot of work to do on it." To be a good campaign designer, you must play your campaigns. It is better to referee published materials that you have adapted to your own use than to work endlessly on a proposed masterpiece that never comes to life in play sessions.

The more detailed the setting, the more effective it is. On the other hand, the more detailed the setting the more detail the gamemaster has to have in his head and at ready reference as he plays. The art of the superior setting is to find a manageable level of detail that will create the proper atmosphere, yet will not be too taxing on the memory and paper reference of the GM.

One important key to efficiency is organization of detail. Here the published materials are quite handy, both for use in play and as models for a gamemaster's organization of his original material. Detail is worthless if it takes five minutes to fumble through notes to find it. If you plan to prepare your own material, make your notes in the form of maps, diagrams, and illustrations wherever possible; visual information is easily communicated and recalled, particularly if you have prepared copies to be displayed for the players. Use photographs from magazines and other references whenever possible to help the players visualize the setting; a picture of a medieval city street or of a modern horse nomad is worth that thousand words, especially if the alternative is to memorize or read the thousand words aloud to your players.

Remember what they told you in school about settings. Appeal to all five senses. Tell the players about the distinctive smells of each section of the city, or about the increasing humidity as the characters proceed along an underground corridor. Rely on sound as often as sight for warnings of danger. Help your players visualize their surroundings; a very useful technique is to describe the scene as if it was a shot from a film or TV program. See the scene through the character's point of view, and thell him what is before him as though he were the camera's eye. Fantasy role-playing sessions have more in common with film than literary fiction. Try to approach the ideal of a cinematic experience; the more aware the player is of the surroundings of his fantasy world, the more deeply immersed he will become in its experience.

CHARACTERIZATION

Another important task in designing a campaign is developing effective characters. There are two types of characters in FRP campaigns – the player's characters (PCs) and the gamemaster s characters, usually known as non-player-characters (NPCs). The gamemaster is directly responsible for the creation of the major villains and allies and the extras that the players will meet in the adventures. Here some of our literary terms are particularly useful in discussing the process of designing useful personalities. First, there is the concept of round and flat characters. A round character is a complex and completely developed personality, full of the quirks and contradictions that we all possess. A flat character, on the other hand, is a narrowly conceived one, a "type" or "stereotype." His personality is highly simplified and streamlined, and only serves the purpose of advancing the story or providing necessary setting or local color. Most NPCs are flat characters, easily identified by a single distinguishing trait – belligerence, timidity, slovenliness, insolence. To create these individuals for a campaign, one needs only a name, a brief physical description, and one distinctive feature of his behavior that will stick in the players' minds. Additional needed detail can usually be improvised in the course of play. A very effective way to develop a vivid flat character is to model him after some TV or screen personality such as Clint Eastwood, Wallace Beery, or Raquel Welch, giving yourself and your players an instant impression of the character. It is also possible to use a literary character as a pattern, but the advantage of an instantly detailed visualization of appearance and mannerism is absent.

Round characters are somewhat more difficult to design. It is best to base these on models that you know intimately, so that you can detail their complexities as well as if you were their closest friend or confidante. You will not often have to provide such detailed information to your players, but you will have to maintain

Hunting in Greenland and Brazil.

the consistency of character behavior and motivation that can only come from a deep understanding of the personality of a character. I recommend using close friends, relatives, and acquaintances as models for important full characters. Occasionally you may feel that a film or literary character is so well portrayed and that you are so familiar with him that you understand this person as well as a friend; nonetheless, I believe personal experience is the best guide for creating credible and complex main characters.

A gamemaster has a much more difficult task of characterization than does a player; he is called upon to play many different roles, often in quick succession, and he must keep these characterizations from blurring into one "gamemaster" character. For example, I have to guard against allowing all my NPCs to be smart-aleck, independent humorists, whether they are bartenders or aristocratic ladies. The gamemaster must not indulge his own personality in the personas of his characters; when he is speaking in the voice of the gamemaster, he may employ his own personal style, but in the voices of his characters he is responsible for playing many disparate and individual roles.

Some of us are naturally comfortable and inventive in creating other personalities, but if you were not born with the gift, there are a number of things that you can do when you prepare a character which will help you to present him as unique and particular. First, give the character a distinctive way of speaking. He may use old-fashioned vocabulary, or pause interminably before each reply, or have certain phrases that he frequently repeats, such as "shucks," or "by Crom's iron," or "don't bet on it." Another way to personalize a character is to give him some distinguishing physical trait, like coughing and clearing his throat before he speaks, or looking at the ceiling instead of his listener, or scratching himself abstractly as he talks. These little bits of personality can be used to introduce a character, and thereafter need only be briefly referred to in subsequent meetings; the players will come to recognize the NPC who is always fidgeting with his helmet straps, or who always chews his mustache when he is talking.

It is also important to have a notion of a character's motivations in order to portray his actions and personality consistently. With a flat character, it is sufficient to list one overriding drive of the individual – greed, pride, need for acceptance or recognition, instinctive distrust. With a more complex character it may be necessary to have a list of important motivations, and to anticipate that there will be conflicts between these different motivations that will cause the character to vaccilate and agonize over difficult decisions. A complex, round character may not be able to give you a quick answer to a difficult question, and he may not be predictable or completely reliable, just like a real person.

When designing the NPCs for a campaign, it is good to look at published materials and see what things are important to know and record about each character. Most published materials will give both a description of the character's abilities in game terms and a description of the character's personality and background. It is not necessary to detail the combat skills of every NPC, a time-consuming chore in many FRP systems. Most NPCs will never find themselves in combat with the characters; if the players insist on moral combat with an innkeeper or baker, I make up the combat abilities on the spot. For minor characters it is enough to know the basic attributes like strength, intelligence, size, and so on. There is no need to randomly roll these stats; usually it is best to assign them according to the function of the character. On the other hand, using dice to roll the stats will sometimes give the gamemaster a spur for improvisation; if the character has a very low charisma, the GM may decide he has some very offensive social problems; if he is unusually weak but very large, the GM may conclude the character has some wasting disease.

No matter how well you prepare your NPCs, the players will always want to talk with some characters that you didn't anticipate. When in a town, I can never tell when one of my players is going to pick a house at random and try to sell Florida real estate. I've found a few tricks of preparation that guard me from momentary fumbling in such cases. First, I keep a stable of minor characters handy from past adventures. Whenever I need an emergency personality, I pull one out. I also have prepared an even simpler and more useful reference on a single sheet – a list of appropriate character names. I find players will overlook or forgive almost any lapse in the background of a character, but it is just too much when a character doesn't even know his own name when asked for it. I can usually improvise a character to suit any situation. After the encounter, the character can be fleshed out as a permanent inhabitant of the setting.

Though the GM has obvious responsibility for the quality of NPC characterization in his campaign, he also has a responsibility for the development of the player-characters.

Tribal chief and entourage in Africa.

Usually the creation of characters is the best detailed section of an FRP game's rules, and development of his character is primarily the player's responsibility, but it is important to help the player do the kind of necessary preparation that will permit him to develop a detailed, self-consistent, vivid character that will sparkle in play. Encourage the player to visualize his character with either artwork or prose description. Establish the background of the character; how does he fit into the social and cultural setting of your campaign? Give him a checklist of important questions he should be able to answer about his character, and cooperatively help him to find satisfying and credible answers for them. Here is a checklist of things a player shoud know about his PC in my campaigns:

- What must I know about myself?
  - How do I usually behave?
  - What are my important drives and motivations?
  - What important posessions do I cherish?
  - What was my education?
  - What are my basic principles?
- What was my family like?
  - What were their important values and principles?
  - What are my personal ties to them?
  - Do I regard my family as a positive or negative model for my behavior and values?
- What is my religious position?
  - Do I belong to a formal cult or religion?
  - How pious and sincere am I in my beliefs?
  - How important to me are the codes and teachings of my religion?
- What is my attitude toward the state (tribe or whatever)?
  - What are its important values and traditions?
  - Am I proud, ashamed, or indifferent to my "citizenship"?
  - Do I consciously or unconsciously reflect my state's prejudices and principles?
- What other persons have had important influences on me?
  - Who are my heroes and foes?
  - Who are my role models?
  - What grudges, debts, and obligations do I recognize?
  - Who are my best friends?
- What is my race?
  - What important cultural and genetic traits have I inherited by birth?

I don't expect my players to know all the answers to these questions when they begin the campaign; they have several sessions to play around with their characters to find out what feels right. After a while, though, I feel it is fair to hold a player to a self-consistent character within the limits we have mutually agreed upon. I do not enforce any behaviors; I simply ask the players to keep the characters reasonably consistent with their background and personality.

Another important consideration in designing a campaign world is whether there should be limits on randomly rolled stats and abilities of new characters, or whether pre-campaign experience should be reflected in the design of the character. In order for a player to play an effective role, the character's abilities should accurately reflect his personality and motivations. This is particularly important in systems like *RuneQuest* where skills and abilities are specifically quantified. In these cases it is reasonable to negotiate with the player appropriate beginning levels of competence in skills the character would regard as important. For example, one of my player-characters is nicknamed "Bow" because of his interest in the long bow. I felt it was unreasonable to have him begin the campaign with only a nominal bow ability, since bow use was as much a part of his character as anything else. Similarly, a character who thought of himself as a thief should at least be somewhat more competent than other members of the party in his stealth skills. There may be players who will try to exploit this negotiation to wrangle a more powerful character, but you will have to face this exploitative impulse sooner or later, and it is best to make it clear from the beginning that the rules are guidelines to aid in the organization of the campaign, not tools for chiseling out the most powerful character possible.

PLOT

There are a number of forms that the narrative of your campaign may take. You may decide that all of the adventures in your campaign will be part of a single storyline, moving from its initiation to a final resolution, just like in a novel. Or you may decide that your campaign will be a series of unrelated adventures with a common setting or characters, like a group of short stories. Or you may decide that there will be no formal narrative; the characters will be free to wander through the setting and find whatever encounters suit them. The latter example is not analogous to any literary narrative form; in effect, you are giving the players the freedom and obligation to write their own narrative. Whether the GM or the players design the plots, fantasy role-playing games require some kind of narrative by their nature; there must be a conflict and the possibility that the characters can resolve that conflict through their own actions. The model

Etruscan warriors.

is adventure fiction, and its narrative is based on a very simple structure – problem, struggle, climax. More particularly, characters are usually presented with a problem; to come up with a solution they must face a series of small challenges to overcome before they can address the main problem in the final resolution. In series fiction, where the character will continue to another adventure, the resolution is often only a partial one; there is a larger conflict which we look forward to facing in the next part of the series.

Important elements in these kinds of plots are action and suspense. Most of the problems faced by the protagonists can be solved by action. The problem solving usually involves some risk of death or serious injury, whether it is riddling a way out of some trap or facing a warrior in melee. This risk produces much of the excitement sought by FRP gamers, and it must be perceived by the players as a real risk. Players will soon tire of endless combats in which it is obvious that the opponents have no chance of threatening the protagonists. The nature of the problems must be surprising, at least to some extent; without suspense, an adventure is likely to be very uninteresting. Here, then, is the task of the campaign builder – to come up with dangerous problems that will surprise and challenge the players. His plots must proceed from a problem that the characters need to solve, and the protagonists must be faced with a series of episodes that lead up to a final climactic action.

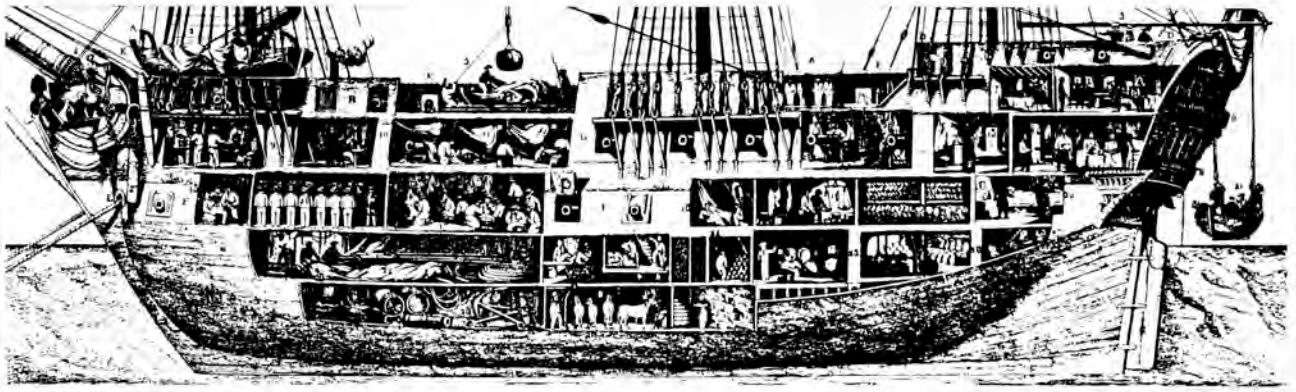
Where is the gamemaster going to find new problems to confront his players with? There are numerous sources for adventure plots on TV, film, and adventure fiction. Most problems will simply be variations on familiar patterns; there is nothing innovative about offering your players a combat, but the opponents and circumstances of the combat can be endlessly varied. New and unfamiliar creatures may be encountered, and arranging a combat at the end of a rope on a cliff face or on a flying carpet can add the element of novelty you seek. Though physical solutions to physical problems (particularly heroic combat) is the staple of adventure gaming, not all problems should require physical action; some should require analysis and logic, or perhaps just luck.

Lavish most of your work on the opening piece of your campaign. Once you have engaged the attention of the players' imaginations, you will find the rest of your task of developing new adventures easier and more rewarding. If the players are enthusiastic about continuing the adventure, you will be encouraged to work hard on subsequent adventures; if there is only a lukewarm reception to your initial effort, you will find it difficult to enthusiastically toil in preparing the next session. Don't try to plot out the entire story line of a campaign before you begin play. It is good to have a number of possible story lines that will follow from your initial session. Then, as play progresses and you learn the inclinations of your players, you will be able to select which of the story lines is most likely to interest them. (I hate to think of all the adventures I have prepared ahead of time, only to discover the adventuring party wants to go off in another direction, bypassing forever my masterpiece.) Inducing the characters to go in the direction you want them to go is a fine art, and one you must perfect if you are to draw them in the direction of your carefully prepared plot. You can employ the carrot – the irresistible reward of fortune and glory – or you can use the stick – the threat that if the characters don't go where they are told, they will suffer unpleasant consequences at the hands of some villain or taskmaster. It is also said that players tend to move in the direction of the most information, though I have seen the perverse whims of players direct them away from things they were well informed about, simply on the principle that nothing could be possibly worse than what they have been told about.

THEME

Theme plays a relatively small but important part in building an FRP world. Having one or two main themes in your narratives will help give a sense of coherence to your campaign, and if they are themes that have a strong appeal for the players, it will add a sense of significance to the adventure that enhances the players' pleasure in overcoming their problems. These themes can be thought of as part of the player-characters' motivations.

There are a number of themes I have used in my campaigns – revenge for unpunished crimes, freedom for an enslaved race, saving the universe from the forces of evil, making the world safe for democracy, to name a few. I have even attempted to introduce tragic themes into fantasy adventure, though with mixed success. In general I don't believe FRP games are good vehicles for the heavier kinds of messages that are very effective in well-written literature. FRP gaming is escapist in nature, a journey out of the mundane into a world of fantasy where justice eventually triumphs and the heroes always manage to survive. Most gamers are not looking for tragedy or abmiguous resolutions; they want a happy ending, and they may be



The interior of a French ship.

disappointed and discouraged if the theme you are peddling is the bad news that trhere is no justice, that everybody dies, often inappropriately, and that the rules that govern our existence are not ultimately designed for our benefit. Nonetheless, I encourage experienced gamemasters to experiment with the rougher, bitter-sweet truths as themes in their FRP campaigns. The ironic end of Elric in Moorcock's Melnibone series is a good example of fantasy literature that embraces the darker side of human nature. An example of a grim theme in a published FRP campaign would be the Gloranthan trolls, who are doomed as a race to bear defective offspring through some god's curse; the cruel and tragic injustice of this burden, and the dignity and sorrow with which the trolls bear it, lends the trolls of *RuneQuest* an epic dignity that none of the other FRP monster races have. They become more sympathetic, more human in their suffering, and through their suffering we care for them in a way we would never care for an orc. Though FRP gaming tends to emphasize the pleasures of successful triumphs in its action and adventure themes, there is also a place for the less-comforting aspects of man's eternal search for his place in the universe.

STYLE

Finally, the gamemaster must decide on the style and mood of his campaign. Is it to be humorous and light, or grim and dangerous? Will rewards and triumphs be relatively rare and dear, or will there be a regular and generous increase in the power, wealth, and success of the characters? Will the emphasis be on combat and tactics, on problem solving games of a general nature, or on dialog and role-playing? Will the background be subtle and detailed, or will it be painted with a broad brush? Will the options open to the players be relatively limited and carefully directed, or will they have the freedom to choose whatever paths they wish?

The area of style is the most difficult to generalize about. There is little in the tradition of literature to guide us in discussing style within role-playing games. FRP gaming is a unique and relatively new mode of narrative expression; though it borrows heavily from the literary techniques of characterization, plot, setting, and theme, the choices of style in FRP gaming are peculiar to its own idiom. For example, the choice of whether to be a generous or stingy gamemaster simply doesn't figure in fiction; it is more a factor of the gaming component of fantasy role-playing. Furthermore, there is no real parallel to the role of the gamemaster in literature; the gamemaster is in a way a sriptwriter/director/performer. The act of creating and presenting a fantasy role-playing campaign is probably closer to the production of a film that is written, directed, and acted by a single person, though even that analogy is seriously limited since in a film the artist and the audience do not interact and share in the process of creation.

The only way for a world-builder to become knowledgeable about the choices of gamemastering styles is to follow the essays and dialogues on the subject in FRP magazines, fanzines, games, and books. Seminars at gaming conventions are also useful sources of practical wisdom. One should seek out opportunities to observe the style of other gamemasters, borrowing for your own style what you find appealing. Even without consciously investigating these sources of information about gamemastering styles, you will find that your style will develop most through experience, through the process of encountering and handling the types of problems that face gamemasters in the design and presentation of their FRP campaigns. Make an effort to look back over your gamemastering experiences and discuss them with your players. Look for your strengths and weaknesses; play on the former and develop techniques to minimize the latter. Think about what you want your campaigns and game sessions to be like, and systematically work toward your objectives. Ultimately each gamemaster's style is his own creation, dependent on his abilities and predispositions, and it is quite possible to develop a very effective style of gamemastering without giving it a conscious thought. Although gamemastering may be an art, it is also a craft, and a craft that can be improved if one is inclined to work hard at it.

Setting, character, plot, theme, and style – look for these features in FRP campaign worlds as well as in fiction. You are not going to have to take a test or write an essay on your analysis like you did in school. Instead look for these elements of fiction because you have become a creative artist yourself, and you wish to learn from the models you encounter in reading and in play sessions. As you apply in the design of your campaign world what you learn from observation and analysis, you will find that your settings will become more consistent and vivid, your characters more distinctive and lively, your narratives more action-filled and suspenseful, and your themes more meaningful for your players.□

DW Presents the World of:

Slobbovia

A 23rd Cavalryman on his barded wartrog wielding a pluglunk.

illustrations by Bruce Schlickbernd

This description of the Slobbovian campaign features notes on linguistics, customs, the justice system, religion, advice to foreigners, sports, military reviews, currency, societal structure, non-human races, and technology.

by Greegor Kostukin
translated by Greg Costikyan

Neurse Schivosk! Welcome to the world of Slobbovia, barbarian slime. We hope your stay here will be less miserable than it might otherwise have been.

Modern Slobbovian history began around 800 After da Faith (A.F.) when a number of peoples settled the lands around the Slobbovian Sea. These peoples migrated from the lands to the far north, and called themselves by a variety of names – Slobbovians, Rabbitanians, Huns, and so on. Some of these races have retained their language and cultural identity virtually unchanged (the Slobbovians, for example), while others have interbred to form new nations (Venturia), still others have developed entirely new cultures in response to the exigencies of life in their new lands (the Pameranians, or Baratanians). Since the 820's, a number of Imperial Surveys have been carried out which have expanded the boundaries of the known world, until the entire expanse of the globe from east to west is known. There are still unknown areas to the north and south, however.

How Not to Make a Contemptible Idiot of Yourself

Barbarians unfamiliar to Slobbovian ways often make unfortunate – some-

times fatal – mistakes. The customs of Slobbovia are many and peculiar, but by keeping a few simple facts in mind the visitor can avoid the most common of mistakes.

The first thing to keep in mind is the Slobbovian language. The Slobbovian language has three moods: the grovellative, to be used when addressing someone who is your social superior; the sneerative, to be used when addressing someone who is your peer; and the insultative imperative, to be used when giving orders to your inferiors. You are a barbarian foreigner, and, unless you are of noble birth and have a proper title, or are an accredited member of a foreign bureaucracy, the assumption is automatically that you are a social inferior. Consequently, you should always use the grovellative when addressing anyone else. This is advisory since even if the person is your inferior, he will feel flattered that you are acknowleding him as your superior. It is also simpler, since this way you only need to learn one of the three verbal moods.

As implied by the moods of the language, Slobbovian is a tongue in which

The Underwater Highlanders on parade with their bagpipe-aqualungs.

Note from the Translator:

Slobbovia is arguably the oldest fantasy role-playing world in continuous existence. It began in 1969 around a lake in the backwoods of Brandon, Manitoba, by a group of over-active teenagers. They invented a game, a version of "King of the Mountain" and they called it "Emperor of Slobovia," loosely basing it on the Li'l Abner *comic strip. The game involved campaigning in canoes and fighting battles by splashing other players with paddles. (This is the origin of that distinctive Slobbovian weapon, the pluglunk).*

As time went on, each player assumed the persona of a great lord of Slobbovia, and traditions about the world began growing. The first map was drawn, based on the lake where Slobbovia originated. Many of the provinces of Alt Slobbovia are still named after important features of that lake – Cabanania was named after a cabin; Rabbitania was a place where rabbits were known to congregate, etc.

Some of the early Slobbovians became involved with playing Diplomacy, *and as a result the* Diplomacy *variant of Slobbovia was born. The game has run continuously ever since, and only one postal campaign has ever been run. This makes sense, because the game can be played by any number of people, and because there is no provision for victory. Like other role-playing games, the purpose of the game is to be played, not to be won.*

To say that Slobbovia is a Diplomacy *variant is misleading. It is much more. Each player has a main character in the game who may own lands and units. (My present character, for example, is Elektrifikatsiya von Schneider.) In addition to his main character, a player may control any number of other characters, none of which may own lands or units.*

Slobbovia is played through a magazine entitled Slobinpolit Zhurnal. *Each issue, the players write stories (called strakh) about their characters, which are printed in the* Zhurnal *along with the moves (which are known as strumph). Players may borrow each others' characters, but usually try to coordinate stories when they do, so that characters don't end up in different places at the same time. Also, it goes without saying that no player may kill another's without his consent.*

The result is that the game of Slobbovia resembles nothing so much as an ongoing cooperative novel. While most role-playing games are oral; Slobbovia is written.

It should be noted, incidentally that each issue contains around 70 pages of strakh, and 6 pages of strumph; the emphasis is on writing and not the moves. Indeed, some players have played for years without ever learning the strumph rules.

How to Get Involved

Slobinpolit Zhurnal *is published semi-monthly by APA-Slobbovia. APA-Slobbovia consists of a number of publishers who publish the magazine in rotation. The current Arkhivist of the APA is Roger Oliver, 67 Franklin Rd, Denville, NJ, 07834. Please write to the above address for further details.*

Prospective players are advised that it takes some time to learn the traditions of Slobbovia and catch up on current affairs. Subscribing for several issues is advised before joining.

A number of other publications about Slobbovia are useful for those interested in more information. They are: The Novice Packet, *available from Ben Grossman, 916 South 49th St, Philadelphia, PA, 19143 for $2 (copy charge). This is a packet of articles and introductory material designed for the new player. It is somewhat out of date, but still invaluable;* Boleski's Unkonkise Hiztory of Slobbovia, *available from the Arkhivist (Roger Oliver's address is listed above) for $2. This is a good introduction to the early history of Slobbovia, but of doubtful value for understanding current events; now out of print is the* Slobinzongbuk, *a compilation of Slobbovian songs, but also in the works are* Seagoonsky's Rezent Hiztory of Slobbovia *and the* Strakh Paket.

it is inherently impossible to say anything nice. Consequently, anything you say even in the grovellative mood may be considered insulting, and you may find yourself in trouble as a result.

A Hoka native living it up on the town.

The best thing to do is to preface and end all of your remarks with the phrase "Neurse Schivosk." This is the only pleasant thing which can be said in Slobbovian. Literally, it means "may you have a better time than you deserve at this cruddy midwinter festival," the colloquial translation of which is "Merry Christmas." Since it is the only pleasant thing which can be said in Slobbovian, it is often used in place of such common phrases as "hello", "goodbye", "please", etc.

In Valgoria, people sometimes use the phrase "Fecundar Strakh." Strakh means "prestige, intelligence, moxie, chutzpah" – all the good things about a person. "Fecundar" means "increase," or "breed," or "engage in sexual activity." The Valgorians think the phrase means "may your prestige increase." However, in the northlands, it is usually translated as something quite different, and is considered a mortal insult.

Mention of strakh leads to another caution. When dealing with Slobbovians, it is wise to forget such barbaric notions as good, evil, fair dealing, justice, honor, etc. In Slobbovia, the basic philosophical division is not between good and evil, or between honor and dishonor, but is between strakh and "strumph." Strakh is prestige and peer recognition, while strumph is power, raw power. A person is strakhful if he reacts to people on the basis of how amusing, clever, and prestigious they are.

A person is strumphish if he is motivated solely by concern for his own well-being, and by power-lust. Power itself is not thought to be inherently bad – indeed, the Czar is at once both the most powerful and strakhful person in Slobbovia – but being motivated solely by desire for power is despicable.

Consequently if, for example, you find yourself cheated by a merchant, do not expect any help from the authorities. The merchant was cleverer than you, more strakhful, and deserves his money. On the other hand, if you can get the merchant to laugh, he will probably cut his prices in recognition of your superior strakhfulness.

Justice in Slobbovia

You are advised never to get arrested. One way to do this is never to commit a crime. This doesn't always work, since one of the papers you signed when entering Slobbovia was an admission that you are actually Egor the Fink. He is one of the greatest of Slobbovian traitors, in the pay of Alfred Aardvark and Satin himself. Consequently, the authorities will always have an excuse to arrest you if they decide it becomes necessary to do so.

The reason that you should never let yourself be arrested is that the Slobbovian justice system is a peculiar one. As an illustration, here is an excerpt from a recent issue of the *Slobinpolit Zhurnal*, Slobbovia's great newsmonthly magazine:

"Isn't she going to be here to defend herself?"

"No!" cried Shelmet Grnuclesvitch, bouncing up from under the table. He climbed laboriously on top of it and announced: "Since she is guilty of treason, to listen to her spout her treasonous poison would be treason on our part. Off with her head!"

"But . . ." said Emily of Gondal, "She has not yet been guilty found."

"Contrariwise," said the Czar, smiling slightly, "If she is innocent . . ."

"Guilty!" announced Shelmet, giving a little leap and collapsing on the table.

"Not just yet, please. If she is innocent, there is no need to submit her to this whole sordid affair."

There was silence in the courtroom.

"Are we ready to proceed?" asked the Czar.

Religion

By and large, Slobbovian religions are tolerant and you are unlikely to get killed or maimed for religious reasons. There are a few exceptions: Phumpha has its own unique religion, and is extremely intolerant of foreigners. Consequently, you are urgently advised to keep kosher while there.

The other religious group of which it is wise to be wary is the Satinists. The Satinists are one of the four major sects of the Holy Sativan Church – the others being the Georgians, the Gregorians, and the Mazukovians. The Satinists practice human sacrifice, and the curia of the Sativan Church has deemed this a legitimate religious practice. Satinists are likely to pick up offworlders for their ceremonies, since foreigners are unlikely to be missed. If you do get in trouble with the Satinists, you are advised to find a Gregorian as soon as possible; the Gregorians hate and despise Satinists, whom they like to burn ritually from time to time. (This, too, is deemed a legitimate religious ritual). This hostility between the Gregorians and Satinists goes on despite the fact that the two sects are nominally both members of the Holy Sativan Church.

You may wish to attend a Gregorian religious ceremony. Many foreigners find it fascinating. The Gregorian equivalent of the Mass is called "Communion." Gregorians believe in coming closer to the Godhead by altering one's awareness with the use of many unusual substances.

Things to Do and See: Sports

If you are a sports fan, you must make time to see a mongeef game. Mongeef

is the Slobbovian national sport, and is avidly followed by many in the land. The rules are very simple: at opposite ends of a field stand goal posts. The ball (known as a *flamsch*) weighs about fifteen pounds and is covered with iron spikes. Each time a team puts the flamsch through the opposing team's goal, one point is scored. Each team begins with eleven players, and no replacements for casualties are permitted. Players are prohibited from injuring spectators purposefully, though sometimes this occurs by error. However, the spectators are free to attempt to influence the outcome of the game. Because heavy weapons are not unknown on the mongeef field, the spectator stands usually resemble war-time bunkers

One of the most famous of recent games was the World Cup of 862 A.F. The World Cup was fought between the Oleomargarine Shoggies (the official team of the Cthulhan Revolutionary Party of the States of Confusion) and the Grund Flet team (fielded by da Grund Flet, the Slobbovian Czar's Navy). The game was played at Boleski Stadium outside the city of Strakenville.

The Shoggies fielded eleven shoggoth team members. Shoggoths are extremely powerful creatures ruled by Cthulhu, and appear as great congeries of bubbles about the size of a subway car. As such, they are no match for the average human. One of the positions fielded by the Shoggies was a magician, whose job it was to interdict naval artillery strikes by the Grund Flet team. Before the game began, the odds were running 10-1 in favor of the Shoggies because the Grund Flet team's major advantage – off-shore bombardment – was thereby negated.

Spectators were surprised when the Grund Flet team appeared on the field in gas-masks. The reason for this soon became clear. By the time the artillery shells began raining down on the field, the Shoggies had already scored ten points and killed two Flet players. But since the Cthulhoid magician was using his spells to prevent the operation of the explosives, the Grund Flet team was using gas shells. Shoggoths have great endurance, and might not have been affected by any everyday poison gas, but the shells were loaded with nitrous oxide. The Shoggies collapsed in helpless laughter across the field, and the gas-mask-clad Grund Flet set up a human chain to hand the flamsch through the goal, bring it around to the front, and hand it through again. The final score was 2374-10, Grund Flet.

Things to See and Do: Drinking

Alcoholism in Slobbovia is not a hobby, it is a way of life. Throughout the world, bars, pubs, drinking establishments, wine shops, and package stores can be found. In addition to bheer and wine, the world of Slobbovia has developed a number of native boozes unavailable or rare elsewhere. You may wish to try one or several of these:

Schnarg is carefully fermented from crottled greeps. (Greeps – crottled, pickled, or stir-fried, are one of the staples of Slobbovian cuisine). The best schnarg is brewed in gymnasiums in Phumpha.

Schnarq (final letter q, not g) is a powerful beverage distilled from schnarg, and is the most popular liquor of the world.

Kummis is made from fermented weasel's milk, and is highly prized by the Huns.

Skumjas is another distilled beverage, and is made from something too disgusting to talk about.

Screech is a liquor distilled from whatever is handy. It gains its name from the fact that a single shot of screech often causes the drinker to screech in agony. It is not recommended for its taste, but is certainly an experience to drink.

Things to Do and See: Military Reviews

Though Slobbovia is now at peace (sort of), most of the nations of the world maintain sizeable military establishments. Military reviews are fairly common, and are among the tourist attractions in many capitals.

Two of the best are the 23rd Cavalry Drill at Strakenville, and the Underwater Highlanders Parade at Oleomargarine. Both units drill weekly. The 23rd Cavalry is a unit mounted on heavy barded warfrogs, with its troopers wielding *pluglunks* and Lee Enfields. (a pluglunk is a pole arm which resembles a canoe paddle with the ends sharpened). The unit is one of the best in the Slobbovian army, but for some reason the sight of giant frogs bounding about with gaily-uniformed soldiers atop them seems to amuse barbarians.

The Underwater Highlanders are one of the most interesting units in Slobbovia, and one of the most feared in the armed forces of the States of Confusion. They are equipped with an invention of Fergit Raskolnikov, the bagpipe-aqualung. This device acts both as a source of air for the user and as a musical instrument. Be early for the parade, because after the first few minutes all that can be seen is a few bubbles rising to the top of the Oleo Sea, and the eerie sound of bagpipes played under water.

A Shoggie mongeef player ready to catch the flamsch.

Currency

A few notes on currency should be made for the benefit of the traveler. Slobbovia has an extensive banking network, and most currencies can be exchanged freely. Gold is relatively valueless because of the prevalence of

wizards who have a habit of transmuting base metals into more valuable ones. Silver, however, is readily acceptable. The most common currencies are the Slobbovian and Venturian *robotniks* and the Baratarian *conti.*

At one time, the robotnik was backed by gold, but inflation became a major problem when wizards began transmuting lead into gold. A reform was attempted by basing the currency on now-scarce lead, but this simply led to reverse transmutations. For a while the gravel standard was tried, without much success, whereupon the Imperial government simply cut the tie between the robotnik and other commodities. This led to paper-based hyperinflation; the result was robotnik notes printed with floating decimal points. During this period, 3.4×10^{37} robotniks was about enough to buy a ham sandwich.

This was obviously an unstable situation. so Czar Ra-Man established a government monopoly on paper, began printing notes on gold leaf, and backed them up with the paper monopoly. This was not terribly successful, and bootleggers began producing their own paper. Eventually, however, a marvelous solution was reached, whereby the robotnik was based on the most common commodity in Slobbovia: the serf. One serf equals one robotnik, by law. (Consequently, murders of serfs are settled in small claims court.) It is true that the number of serfs can be inflated over time, but human gestation and breeding does take time, so the Slobbovian robotnik is now relatively stable.

Slobbovian Society

Slobbovian society is a class-conscious one. There are basically four classes: serfs who are peasants tied to the land which can be sold or traded at whim; peasants, who are technically free men but have few rights; freemen, (or in Slobbovian terminology, bhadjerks); and the strakheinvolk, the aristocracy. At the pinnacle of the aristocracy are the Great Families, families which have had among their numbers at least one Czar and at least one Grund Patriarch. The most notable of modern-day Great Families are the Vurklemyers, the Zhukovskis, the Dragomilovs, and the Seagoonskies. They are, respectively, the hereditary Prinzes of Venturia, Grand Masters of the Knights Dispensable of Jamul, Chiefs of the Slobbovian Assassination Bureau, and Goons of Phumpha.

You should remember that, as a foreigner, you will be accorded the status of a bhadjerk unless you can prove patent of nobility or membership in a foreign bureaucracy.

Non-Human Races

There are three main nonhuman sapient species in Slobbovia, of which you should be aware. The most common are the *cronks.* The sapient status of cronks is fiercely disputed, since their language has only one word: "birdie!" "Birdie," loosely translated, means "yummy." Cronks are capable of eating literally anything – dirt, people, telephone poles, even food – and consequently, if you ever meet a cronk who says "birdie!" while looking at you, you are well advised to run like hell. Cronks are vaguely humanoid, are covered with dirty brown hair, stand about 4 feet tall, and stink to high heaven. Their stink is one of their major weapons, since their stench has been known to cause others to faint, making them easy prey for a cronk.

The *sand whales* live in the great Sea of Sand along the northwestern periphery of Slobbovia. Their first known appearance was on a map drawn by the Second Imperial Survey, on which a whale was drawn within the Sea of Sand. This was assumed to be a cartographical error until the Archbishop of St. Tammany voyaged to that desert, discovered the sand whales, and converted them to the Holy Sativan Church. Sand whales look much like other whales, but swim and dive through the sandy desert, eating other tunneling creatures.

Hokas, common on other worlds (see Anderson's *Earthman's Burden*), stand about 3½ feet tall, are covered with brown fur, and look much like teddy bears. They are a vigorous, strong, and highly imitative people. In Slobbovia, they live mostly in Phumpha and environs.

Government

The titular sovereign of Slobbovia is the Czar, currently Czar Alexandr D'metre Nikolaievitch Illanov-Rabinsky. The Slobbovian Empire lays claim to the entire planet, but controls only a portion of it. The rest of the globe is controlled by other prinzes (or republican assemblies), some of whom acknowledge the titular sovereignty of the Czar, others reject it. For many years, the Empire was essentially autocratic, but seems to be evolving toward a democracy. The Douma, a legislative body occasionally called into session by previous Czars, has recently been made permanent, and endowed with the power to remove the Czar upon its pleasure. As the Douma is now elected, rather than stuffed with the Czar's cronies, political parties are beginning to evolve – the most important of which are the Imperialists, the Party Party (whose slogan is "Let's Party!"), and the Corruption Party (which promises to bring patronage to the little people).

The third great institution of the Empire is the Imperial Bureaucracy, which makes the wheels of government turn. It is immense and basically ungovernable, operating most of the time without the knowledge or understanding of the Czar or Douma. The Director of the Bureaucracy is Vladimir Beacronk, reputed to be more powerful than the Czar himself. The Bureaucracy's motto is "Czars and Empires Come and Go, but the Imperial Bureaucracy Lives On!"

Other lands are ruled in much the same way. Venturia is the personal fief of the House Vurklemeyer, Jamul of the Zhukovskis. The States of Confusion is a revolutionary state which has recently been coopted into the Empire.

Technology

Foreign barbarians sometimes make the mistake of attempting to overawe Slobbovians with "superior" technology. This mistake is often fatal. In the past, Slobbovia had nuclear weapons, supersonic aircraft, and all the outdated accoutrements of a society heading for ecocatastrophe. Today, the more advanced modern weapons such as the airship, the rifle, and the railroad have been developed; already, some of the more advanced states are experimenting with spears and arbalests. Simpler devices are used because they are cheaper, last longer, and are less prone to breakdown. In addition, the "labor-saving" aspect of "modern" technology is irrelevant to Slobbovian society.

Phage Pie Euphraino U, Komrad

This is the motto of the Slobbovian Empire, and a fitting one with which to end this travelers' guide. In Slobbovia, it means "Eat, Drink, and Be Merry, Comrade." We hope your stay in Slobbovia is not too detestable, and that you will spend lots of money here and make us all rich. □

Traveller

BATTLE-RIDERS VS. Battleships

THE NAVY REPLIES

In a previous issue of this magazine, Paul Montgomery Crabaugh reported the results of a study conducted by Interstellar Technical Consultants of Mora, ostensibly at the request of the Imperial Navy, regarding the relative merits of battle-riders and battleships. The results of the study, if valid, reveal the total bankruptcy of the Imperial Navy's force structure; it is therefore incumbent upon the Navy to explain its position to the public.

First a disclaimer: the ITC study was not commissioned by the Navy; indeed, the Navy has been unable to procure a copy of the study's final report, and this reply is necessarily based wholly on Mr. Crabaugh's article. (Although he fails to so state, Mr. Crabaugh is an officer of ITC.)

Mr. Crabaugh begins with a common misconception of the traditional argument for battle-riders: this being that a battle-rider, unburdened with a jump drive, can defeat a battleship of equal tonnage. As Mr. Crabaugh states, this is both obvious and meaningless. The true argument, which the Navy has always used, is that a fleet composed of battle-riders (and the necessary number of fleet tenders) can defeat a fleet of battleships constructed at the same cost.

It is profitable to analyze the costs of starship design. Separating the jump and combat functions saves costs in several areas and adds costs in others. In order to fulfill its strategic role, a battle squadron must be capable of jump-4; jump drives and (especially) jump fuel make up 53% of the tonnage in a jump-4 ship. Battle-riders save the cost of armor, meson screens, and high-agility maneuver drives for this immense tonnage. There are additional costs for some duplication of hulls, power plants, computers, and maneuver drives for the fleet tender (which Mr. Crabaugh calls the mother ship). On balance, however, the battle-rider squadron comes in at a considerable cost saving.

Another useful sqadron comparison is that of survivability. Many starship systems are tonnage-dependent; they take up a certain percentage of the ship's tonnage regardless of its size. These systems all fight for space within a design. Battleships, with their 53% of dead space (for battle purposes), are at a severe disadvantage in this fight. A battleship cannot simultaneously possess the best armor, best meson screen, and a high agility; with the jump drive and fuel, these components would add up to more than 100% of its hull space. Compromises must be made in the design of a battleship, while a battle-rider requires no such compromises. A battle-rider, being smaller than a battleship, is also somewhat harder to hit. This adds up to a much higher survivability for the battle-rider.

The ITC study presents several further arguments against the battle-rider/fleet tender system, none of which have been borne out in practice.

It is claimed that battleriders are undergunned in comparison to battleships. True, a 120,000 ton battleship can carry more total weaponry than a 70,000 ton battle-rider (assuming the weaponry and power supply therefore will fit), but the majority of a capital ship's offensive power is contained in its spinal mount weapon, and no ship, whatever its size, has so far proven capable of mounting more than one spinal weapon. The battle-rider can mount the same spinal weapon as a battleship; their relative offensive strengths are much closer than mere tonnage would indicate. Moreover, 70,000 tons is very large for a battle-rider; most are between 30,000 and 50,000 tons, yet possess as powerful a main weapon as the largest battleship at a fraction of the cost.

The report claims that unarmed tenders are vulnerable in battle. Actual battle experience has shown that a fleet's battle-riders are fully capable of protecting the tender from enemy fire while simultaneously engaging in offensive action. Only if the battle line were broken would the tenders be exposed to fire (and in such a case most of the battle-riders would necessarily be crippled or destroyed already). An admiral who feels that tenders restrict his tactics is fully capable of releasing the riders from a jump point far from the area of battle and leaving the tenders to remain there; it is very unlikely that a patrolling enemy would locate them given such a large volume of space to search. Battle-riders are fully capable of operating on their own for periods of a month or more (indefinitely if there is a source of fuel).

Finally, the study claims that a battle-rider/tender-based fleet is inflexible. One rider cannot be sent to a trouble spot the way one battleship can; the smallest unit is a tender transporting four to eight riders. While true, this has not proven a major drawback. The study correctly states that the main use of single capital ships is in what Mr. Crabaugh indelicately terms "gunboat diplomacy." (The Navy uses the less emotionally loaded "deterrent demonstration.") The purpose is to safeguard the lives and interests of Imperial citizens in the various smaller states beyond the Imperial borders by a public (though non-threatening) display of the Navy's power. However, a large cruiser is generally sufficient for these demonstrations. There are enough battleships in the fleet to cover the few instances in which a cruiser will not serve, and most of these are concentrated in the appropriate frontier regions for just such uses.

The conclusions to be drawn is that the Navy's current construction and deployment policies are indeed the best possible solution to our defense needs. Any return to a battleship navy would have disastrous consequences; be assured that the Zhodani and the so-called Solomani Confederation (whose fleets are also composed of battle-riders) are well aware of this.

Sir John Harshman
Captain, Imperial Navy

By Direction:
Vice Admiral Baron Mtume,
C-in-C Corridor Fleet

Paul Montgomery Crabaugh's summary of the ITC report can be found in **Different Worlds** *26.* □

Traveller is a trademark of GDW.

The Entébor Campaign

Creating a workable role-playing campaign is a complex process that yields personal satisfaction and weeks of enjoyable role-playing for the participants.

By David Frauenfelder and Michael Vinson

Contrary to the belief of most of our players, Entebor is far more than just a place for player-characters to run in. It has history, lore, and people who are all alive and real. But how did it start? It was not easy.

In the Fall of 1977, we had been playing *Dungeons & Dragons* for less than a year. Our little group of players had seen *D&D's* rise, golden age, and the beginning of its downfall when we (David F. and Michael V.) first started to gamemaster together. Our first effort at a dual game was a land called Amar, which consisted of a couple of maps and a six-level dungeon. It was a flat, two-dimensional wilderness run for the sake of the player-characters alone. The games we ran were infrequent and unimaginative: a dungeon run, a few monsters, and some treasure. But from Amar we learned that we were compatible at double gamemastering even if the world we were running was not the greatest.

Out of Amar's grave rose our statement, a protest. We were sick of the typical 40° latitude England-type lands with tall, blonde, Nordic types running around worshiping ungainly pantheons of indifferent gods, beset by monsters at every turn. Instead, we chose a tropical wilderness with short Southern European people who worshiped a centralized, monotheistic religion, with civilized areas having almost no monsters and wilderness sections having many. We called it Entebor (pronounced En-TAY-bor).

Entebor would be situated on the equator of its world, and would be quite small and compact. Further, we decided to make it complete, and to model much of it after the world of Arduin.

Late in 1978 we made the first map of Entebor. Entebor is tiny compared to the huge wilderness that many GMs are fond of. It is about two-thirds the size of Sicily, with three-quarters of a million inhabitants, shaped roughly like a long leaf with the stem pointing east and the serrated edges facing west.

We plunged into the work of creating a complete world, striving to make it as detailed as the Arduin campaign. Such a task proved to be difficult and time-consuming. When we had finished a month's work, all we had was a hodge-podge of conflicting information and many completely keyed exhaustive dungeon levels.

It was fortunate that, after a frenzied afternoon ending in desperation, Dave Hargrave had us over one evening for a world-building session. For us, the seminar was Entebor's great leap forward, for we gained the two most important concepts necessary to a complete world: continuity of mythos and improvisation.

Continuity

Dave stressed that to have a complete world, one needs continuity, a binding force that links the dungeons to the cities, the mysterious to the mundane, and the men to the gods. We needed a recent and ancient history with a detailed, interlocking mythos. Everything in the world that had a history should be consistent with everything related to it. The concept of continuity extends itself from the lineage of old kings to a shop and its owner. Everything that exists in a real world should exist in a fantasy role-playing campaign.

Improvisation

Improvisation, or ad-libbing is just as important as continuity though they sometimes conflict. In the real world, the level of information available to the players is higher than in a conventional fantasy role-playing world. Players need to know much more data than what we have at hand, sometimes simply the name of a fruit merchant. We couldn't catalog the entire population of Entebor for our reference so we ad-lib.

Ad-libbing was a natural for us as dual GMs. If a single GM has to improvise, he must do it all in his head as he listens to the players talk. With us, one of the GMs can write down information while the other stalls the players. This concept of GMing has extended itself to every phase of our gaming: from the owner of a fruit stand to a complete dungeon level, complete with denizens and booty.

Creating the Campaign

To link these two concepts together, Dave advocated increased communication between other FRPers with differing opinions. The most valuable source of communication has been Lee Gold's APA, *Alarums & Excursions,* to which we have been contributing for over two years. *A&E* has provided us with many ideas and feedback.

With those tools at our side, we proceeded to create continuity. But we needed some organized way of doing our work, a schedule or framework to spur us on. So we set a deadline and wrote a list of things to be done before our first run. The list looked something like this:

Six places of mystery
Three caverns (one level each)
Three towers (five+ levels each)
Comprehensive map of Entebor (one mile to the square)
Maps of five cities, their inns and places of interest

Map of surrounding continents
Political system/situation
Military system
Nobles, noble families and other officials
NPCs, highwaymen, notable personalities
Religion
Calendar
Historical time-line
Holidays and important dates
Flora and fauna
Climate and weather patterns
Our personal greater demons

Why such an exhaustive list? We wanted Entebor to be complete. With these basic elements, we felt we had a good framework on which to build.

We had two and a half months to do all this. We worked intensely on the project, often neglecting schoolwork. But we had a good time: we enjoyed the work and pressure.

We feel a pang of nostalgia looking back on those days, when Entebor was much younger and we were ever so hopeful, even innocent. A lot of the sweat and work that went into Entebor could never have happened if we weren't good friends. In our two and a half years of double GMing, we have come to the conclusion that running a double GMed game is not better as a rule, but an exception. In order to run a good dual game, both GMs must be good friends, have similar gaming philosophies but complementary mentalities, must be able to do the same amount of work, and above all, must have similar schedules.

We had no method for doing the work set before us. We did it as the whim struck us and whims can sometimes be very productive. For example, we had approximately 600,000 city dwellers to locate. Galiganon, our capital, had 150,000 denizens in the city proper and much more outside the walls. Clearly, we could not describe every building, or every street, for that matter. So, instead of mapping cities the conventional way, we used an extra large piece of graph paper and made the scale large enough so that the streets were just lines, rather like a street map of a modern day city. This gave us an area of over four square miles and thousands of streets, just like a real city of over 100,000 and just as bewildering for the visitors.

Much of Entebor's lore is locked in with its nexus, a gate to other worlds. The idea comes directly from Arduin, though the location and characteristics of our nexus is very different from Hargrave's. In fact, the whole nation of Entebor owes its origin to the nexus.

The accepted religion in Entebor is Catholicism. Some 460 years ago (Entebor time), when huge plagues were wracking Medieval Europe, the nexus opened by chance in St. Peter's Cathedral. Some 300 worshipers were whisked away to Entebor, where they found barbarians whom they quickly converted to Christianity. Thus was established the Enteborian Catholic Church.

When we began Entebor, we decided to utilize a religion that would mean something to its inhabitants instead of the ungainly pantheons mentioned before. Catholicism had a readily available bank of information, and fitted with the medieval setting, so we used it. This does not mean that we use it in its pure form; on the contrary, Enteborian Catholicism is a sect in itself, steeped in both Terran and barbarian traditions.

Also because of the nexus, Entebor is a very mystical land. It is called "The Lodestone" by its people for its unusually high concentration of magic (due to the magical forces that arrive through the nexus). Actually, Entebor has three nexi – the only interdimensional gates in the whole world, though only one is known commonly. People have always feared the dangerous monsters the nexus spawned over the aeons. This is the reason for Entebor's high urban population: the people preferred to be close together for mutual security.

We had situated Entebor on the equator of its world, and we had to make a climate consistent with that fact. Accordingly, we delved into atlasses to create a believable weather pattern. Once that was established, we needed flora and fauna consistent with the climate. Once again, the atlasses and reference books proved invaluable. A lot of this work was simply research, taking only our imaginations to shape it as we desired.

We decided to make the political system a monarchy with other lords and nobles, similar to a feudal society. The difference is that in Entebor, the king wields far more power than his nobles, commanding an army ten times the size of the most powerful duke. This was convenient for our game, since these types of societies seem to dominate other FRP worlds. Further, to create a more realistic state of affairs, we developed an extensive body of nobles and high officials working around and through courts which are held every four months. To determine the intrigues and events at court time and during the months between them, we made a random events chart, similar to Hargrave's in *Runes of Doom* geared to our society.

The courts happen on the solstices and equinoxes of the year (another idea from the world of Arduin). The year has 404 days, divided into four 100 day *quads* of four months each, and four intermediary days, *quadits*, the holidays and dates for the courts. We named the months after heroes and saints in Entebor as well as certain flora and fauna that is prominent or has holidays in that season.

With all these nobles, cities, NPCs, and other things to name, we realized that a consistent name and language pattern was necessary. Thus the worshipers who came through the nexus brought Latin with them, and today Enteborian is something of a Romance language, though Latin (in its classical form) is still spoken in the church. We took Christian names and corrupted them (Gregory = Gragrai, Augustine = Agaton, Sebastian = Zabaad), as well as some pure barbaric names (Seramis, Gortar, Tain). Surnames are direct corruptions of Latin words (Bonhom = Goodman = Bonus Homo), except for the noble surnames, which take the founder of the line and display him proudly (De Gortar = of the line which Gortar founded). The present king is named Barradax Aber (his father) DeCorianus II.

This comprises but a small list of the piles of information we have amassed since 1978. And Entebor is still growing. Every week, every day we find new topics to cover. Included are such things as the relationships between the greater (noble) families of Entebor, the political factions and their relationships, technology, the way magic relates to physics, social upheavals (possibly the emergence of an Enteborian Luther or Calvin), etc.

For you who are seeking a quick and easy way to build a world such as an Arduin or an Entebor, we hope that this article has helped in grasping the time and issues involved. Imagination and dedication are very important for creating your own world, and we hope we have given you a little of ours by telling you of our experiences. □

Godwar:

How to Run a Multiverse Campaign

Illustration by Roland Brown

by Mike Sweeney

Betsy raced down the wide corridor, her sneakers leaving irregular tracks in the thick dust. The whistling snarls of her pursuers echoed down the stone passage as she took one last look at the nexus indicator on her wrist.

There! The gate was opening just ahead of her. Where it led she didn't know, except that it would probably carry her further and further from her home Earth. The bulky laser pistol Ha'zan had given her was firm in both hands as she reached the glowing disk and vanished . . . .

The flow of a role-playing campaign can be designed to go from world to world, from time period to time period, and from universe to universe with the use of time and space machines. There is a large body of published fiction that can be used as a source of ideas in designing such a campaign.

A *multiverse* is a campaign made up of several different universes. Below is a description of my first such campaign.

THE GODWAR CAMPAIGN

Player-Characters

Most characters played are ordinary people of twentieth-century Earth, coming from all walks of life. Most of them have a restless and exploring nature. They do not need to be fit, or skilled; in the myriad worlds of the multiverse even a blind deaf-mute may find a place.

Their origin is similar to that of the players. The player-characters are constructed, not rolled, so every detail of their background is known to the player. The opportunities are wide; our players have ranged from Colombian drug smugglers to college students and twee British girls.

The System

The role-playing system chosen must be flexible and fast. You should be able to generate an opponent's statistics by the time you have finished describing him to the players. *Traveller* works well; it and an unpublished system were what we used.

Basic Role-Playing, *RuneQuest*, or *Worlds of Wonder* are also effective. The character generation charts in *Call of Cthulhu*, based on the *BRP* system are also very useful. Use what you are familiar with. If *Champions* types are out to take on the universe, use *Champions;* it saves having to adapt all those villains.

The Contact

The characters are contacted individually by a mysterious entity. Calling itself Tao or Tau, it offers a job full of adventure and whatever else the

Table A — Nexus Exit Type

Roll D6

1 Normal: on a street corner; in a deserted apartment; on an ancient road.
2 Useful: remote enough so the traveler may observe and plan.
3 Involved: behind the drape at a secret war council; naked on a statue in Times Square; some place otherwise embarrassing or difficult.
4 Remote: distant from the assignment; in a position difficult to leave, such as prison.
5 Dangerous: between battle lines; in front of a train; during a cataclysm; even high in the air.
6 Roll twice on this table and combine the results: useful and remote, dangerous and involved, etc. If 6 is rolled again, roll thrice and combine.

Table B — Nexus Location and Date

Chart One — Period

Roll D10

1 Previous cycles, godtime, beyond time as we know it.
2 Distant past, from big bang to late mesozoic.
3 From the first humanoids to the proto-literate period; circa 3,000 BC.
4 Ancient world; see Breakdown a.
5 Middle ages; see Breakdown b.
6 Modern; see Breakdown c.
7 Near future; see Breakdown d.
8 Star-travel period, up to 10,000 AD.
9 Colonization and stellar empires.
10 The decline of galactic empires and emphatic heat-death.

Breakdown – a

Roll D10

1 Circa 4,000 BC: Neolithic, domestication, agriculture, Stonehenge.
2 Ca. 2,500 BC: early dynasties in Egypt, Near East.
3 Ca. 2,300 BC: dynasties of Akkad, Ur, the pyramids.
4 Ca. 2,000 BC: Egyptian Middle kingdom.
5 Ca. 1,600 BC: Egyptian New kingdom, Babylonian dynasties.
6 Ca. 900 BC: early civilizations in the Americas, Assyrian empire.
7 Ca. 400 BC: Persian empire and classical Greek beginning.
8 Ca. 300 BC: Alexander, the Hellenistic period.
9 Ca. 100 BC: Roman republic.
10 Ca. 1 AD: Roman empire.

Breakdown – b

Roll D10

1 Ca. 100 AD: rising of Christianity.
2 Ca. 400 AD: division of Roman empire, Byzantine era.
3 Ca. 600 AD: Moslem era, Classical period in the Americas.
4 Ca. 800 AD: Carolignian.
5 Ca. 1,050: Norman conquests.
6 Ca. 1,100: First and Second Crusades.
7 Ca. 1,250: Gothic.
8 Ca. 1,430: Agincourt, Joan of Arc, subdivision of the Khanate.
9 Ca. 1,600: opening of Europe, English Renaissance, Shakespeare.
10 Ca. 1,700: rise of Prussian empire, Louis XV.

Breakdown – c

Roll D10

1 Ca. 1800's.
2 Ca. 1900: industrial revolution.
3 Ca. 1920: WWI, Prohibition.
4 Ca. 1930.
5 Ca. 1940.
6 Ca. 1950.
7 Ca. 1960.
8 Ca. 1970.
9 Ca. 1980.
10 Ca. Now.

Breakdown – d

Roll D10

1 Within the next few years.
2 Ca. 2000: commercial shuttle ventures, sattelites, minor wars.
3 Ca. 2200: WWIII if ever, planetary colonization, overpopulation.
4 Ca. 2400: possible faster than light drives, new energy sources.
5 Ca. 2600: first contact, possible inter- and intra-species warfare.
6 Ca. 2800: stellar colonization period, stellar governments.
7 Ca. 3000: stellar federations, wide exploration.
8 Ca. 4000: large scale governments and empires, massive wars.
9 Ca. 5000: first true empires, new technology, magic, gates, etc.
10 Ca. 7000: galactic-scale exploration and colonization.

characters most desire, and explains as little as possible beyond that.

The nature of the contact ranges from odd to whimsical, and is tailored to the habits of the characters:

The monster on the late, late, late show turns to the screen and addresses the characters.

A new video game proves peculiarly talkative.

They are approached by another agent of Tao.

An old book has a new chapter, invisible to anyone else.

When a character accepts employment, Tao will show them the first nexus. Sometimes characters are accidentally involved; coming to an agent's aid, even falling in the nexus.

Gates or Nexi

A gate between universes is called a nexus, also a junction, portal, or stargap. Tao can manipulate the nexi at will, but otherwise a certain set of rules apply.

A nexus is usually invisible to a native, but always detectable by a visitor to that universe. It may be a feeling in the air, a tingling, a sound, a blurry image, sometimes a symbol or sign; once a nexus was marked with a totally silent and otherwise undetectable plume of blue fire a quarter mile high.

While a simple nexus usually works when touched, there are artifacts that have tamper-proof controls. Natives may sometimes stumble through the nexi, but more often must be led. Unless the nexus is an artifact, it will exist in a fixed place for a finite time.

Nexi are intimately connected with *Jonbar junctions.* These are critical moments when several alternate worlds could arise. Nexi are often found before pivotal, world-shaking events.

Although the entrance side of the nexus must be tracked down, the exit side is only where you happen to appear. One of our players added a bit of fun to this exit procedure with table A – Exit Type.

The journey between nexi is always unusual. The effect depends on where you were and how you left, where you are going, and how you appear. Designing the special effect – the nature, location, and feeling of the nexus – calls for imagination and fancy as the following examples show:

The travelers stepped out onto a starmap gridded for **Trillion Credit Squadron.** *There was a whirling, weightless sensation and they sprawled out in the airlock of Battlemoon X-76.*

The door at the top of the stairs of the old Brooklyn house opened into an alien vista under a purple sky.

The Eye of Oehotle glowed brilliant green. The eerie glow spread in waves through the structure and fittings of the Trimoder, and finally over the horrified passengers. The plane faded away and rank jungle faded in.

As the pilot fought to clear the looming peak, the mysterious woman grabbed Larry's hand and walked blithely through the solid metal and glass wall of the foundering 747. He passed out for a moment, and came to sitting on a desk, holding a different hand. Then gunfire rattled from outside the almost deserted police station of Precinct 13.

They triggered the transporter beam and everything fragmented around them. The ambassador, suddenly alone, swore in disbelief, firing his handgun again and again at the empty space.

State of Balance

Tao is controller of nexi and protector of parity. The yin-yang symbol illustrates his method; preserve the balance of positive and negative with the tint of each yin within the other yang.

Tao will not tip scales, he will arrange for both alternatives to have an equal chance. His agents have the power to improve a bad situation, but their presence also makes it possible that bad will become disastrous. The chance of a mission succeeding is nominally 50/50, though the agent survival rate is much higher.

Tao prefers to have his purpose to remain opaque. His missions are whirlwinds of change, and the agents are often plunged into the center of the action. In a military dictatorship the agents may turn out to be the revolutionaries. In an overly ordered utopia Tao waves the flag of chaos. In a fragmented world, Tao may act as a multiversal Red Cross, bringing with him hope and humanity.

Tao likes riddles, mysterious acts, and whimsy. The workings of the multiverse can be exceedingly subtle. A spilled drink may call a new world into existence. It is to these ends that characters are prepared when they pass through the nexi; they will not always have the RAM auto-grenade launcher to terrorize the natives.

When traveling between the nexi, the characters should be prepared for integration into the world they are going to. The C – Integration charts are used for this. The tendency should be toward alteration; a wristwatch may become a Tao-watch (a nexus-locating instrument, among other functions), a flashlight might become a light sabre, and medications might become healing herbs. Chart C – 3 explains how much Tao will tell you about the mission. This information may come as echoing voices, telepathy, scrolls, folded scraps of paper in hatbands, or readouts on the Tao-watch.

A mission may seem to be obvious, such as stopping of an assassination. Wandering on an alien world, ignored, may be a more obscure task. It may be a direct command or quest, or it may simply be a struggle to find the nexus and get out of a horrifically dangerous environment.

The Worlds of the Multiverse

A multiverse is a transfinity of connected universes. These may be described by a simple line: "Aboard the Ore Hauler in the Movie *Alien*." They may be as complex as a multi-session campaign. The optimum length description for me is a paragraph to a page, with the emphasis on the mission.

Draw up several before you start to play. The rules for creation are the same as for any campaign; internal logic, sufficient detail, directions for plots must all be present. Since I like to create during play, I surround myself with books and magazines, an atlas, and history textbooks, folders of illustrations, clip sheets of maps and plans, sourcebooks, and a thesaurus.

When dealing with alternate Earths, I use the B – Creation charts. Perhaps an example is appropriate:

I rolled a period of six (Modern) on table B – 1, two (Industrial revolution) on table B – 1c, and a divergence of five (Single, widespread change) on table B – 3. On table B – 4 I got four (Scientific or technological development or discovery).

As I was just reading a biography of Nicoli Tesla, I thought it fun to push him ahead of Edison and avoid direct current entirely. Thus, New York is lit by alternating current not a decade past the turn of the century.

But what will the characters do? I tried table B – 4 again and got three (Exploration and discovery). Jules Verne's **Five Weeks in a Baloon** *is not that far off period. So my adventurers may find themselves on an eccentric inventor's dirigible, armed with the powers of electricity and rushing across Africa to the mouth of the river Ganges which they hope to claim for Great Britain before a gang of evil slave traders . . . .*

Equipment

The one piece of standard equipment, the nexus-indicating Tao-watch, is shaped like a slim black digital watch. Three buttons operate three high resolution color-coded displays, giving lattitude and longitude, a pointer and range, sometimes alternate coordinate systems, time of nexus event and time the nexus will last, and a probability in negative exponents.

The yellow channel indicates personal, small-sized nexi and, at times, other agents.

The red channel tells of pivotal, universe-altering events, and is the key for the mission; it tells the agent where to go, but not what to do.

The blue displays left-overs. It may have a message from Tao, it may even play video games. Blue is Tao's favorite channel.

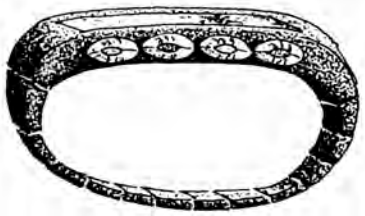
In my campaign, the players ran into an apartment base similar to that of Gary 7 in the *Star Trek* episode "Assignment Earth." This base transported itself, lock, stock and barrel, into varied apartments in Glissande, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, decorating the foyer to suit the period.

The base had a transporter that was also a nexus, racks of weapons, gadgets, and a computer-assisted library. Later Prime Base, with everything from underground hangar to cross-universal bulletin board was discovered.

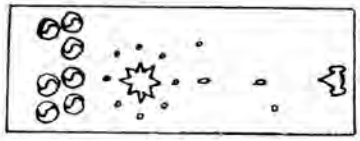
Conclusion

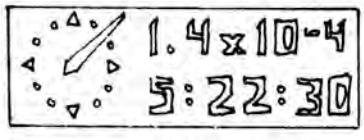
You should now have some basic concepts needed for intercampaign travel. Given these, and the care and sweat any campaign deserves, you may play anyone, from *Traveller* characters lost in the world of "Glorantha" to a tactical crosstime battle involving everyone from simple explorers to multiversal merchant princes.

Tao Watch



Yellow channel visual showing flashing nexus location.





Blue channel giving time, nexus probability, and agent location coordinates.

Chart Two – Divergence

Roll D10

1 No change at all or undetectable; normal Earth.
2 Subtle, often undetectable divergence; minor dates or names changed.
3 Slight changes; perhaps complete excisement of something familiar.
4 Moderate changes; usually many small, logically different steps.
5 One single, often far-reaching change.
6 Varied structural change in government, technology, etc.
7 Varied alterations in the basic state of the world such as geography, physics, etc.
8 Widespread changes hard to trace historically.
9 Completely foreign environment, everything changed up to basic structure of the Solar system.
10 Joker's wild; whimsy, fictional, mathematical fables, you name it.

Chart Three – Event

Roll D10

1 Major war or conquest.
2 Battle, maneuver, skirmish, other military incident.
3 Exploration and discovery.
4 Scinetific or technological development.
5 Incident of a personal nature, perhaps involving a pivotal figure.
6 Political maneuver, trial, election, assassination.
7 Natural or human-caused disaster.
8 Minor incidents that touch off vast forces, such as the crushing of a rose.
9 Outside forces, aliens, gods, nexus-jumpers.
10 Actions of the adventurers, other strange matters.

illustration by Mike Sweeney

Table C — Integration & Assignment

Chart 1 — Integration

Roll D8

1 No integration: pass through the nexus unchanged.
2 Disguised: come out with clothes and features altered to fit in better with the new world. Also, large technological or weaponry disparity will be changed; in a strongly magic world you might lose your battle armor but gain a magic item.
3 Equipped: gear, even minor skills like equestrian or spoken language provided to help fit the agent in.
4 Near complete integration: fully equivalent equipment, some personal gear disguised to resemble native gear, even specific mission gear.
5 The skills and basic knowledge of a member of society but no period gear.
6 Full integration: gear, clothing, features, documents, like a completely normal member of that society, perhaps with even a home and job, as well as the skills and basic knowledge of the man on the street.
7 Face is known, people will recognize you, but you have no information about the world at all or the people who claim to be long-time friends.
8 Complete integration including mental; a strong tendency to think and react as a member of society.

Chart 3 — Mission File

Roll D6

1 No information about the mission at all. You have to figure it out yourself.
2 Some background; this is a colony world of a small stellar empire, currently suffering under a junta in their own government.
3 Detailed background; this will be a thick file including maps & diagrams, history and topics.
4 A riddle; you are given a line or two seemingly referring to the purpose of the expedition.
5 A simple terse request; Ammadonna has entered the nexus, and will arrive in your home timeline. Her presence there will change your world beyond your recognition if you cannot rescue and bring her out.
6 You are given a thick file or world background, specific data diagrams and files on persons involved in the projected mission, and full instructions for the task ahead.

Table D — Links

Roll D6

1 No apparent link between this and your world.
2 Jonbar junction; a pivotal incident has shifted the flow of reality.
3 Location; a similar place, or the same place in different time.
4 Apparent link between worlds; similar images but not quite the same.
5 Pattern; there is some other reason for this nexus that may be deciphered.
6 Roll twice on this chart and combine.

illustration by Reed Stover

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By His Bootstraps by Robert Heinlein. One of the best self-looping stories.

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PANDORA: RATIONA

by Arlen P. Walker

Some of you may wish to design your campaign world from the core out. This article t

WANTED: Planet to act as host for a fledgeling fantasy campaign. Must orbit a star of a cooler temperature than Sol. Other planetary conditions must include: an icebridge linking all continents, larger flying creatures than Terra's a sixteen hour day, and a year of about 256 of those days.

If I had written a want-ad at the start of my Livingstone campaign describing the requirements for its homeworld, its description would have read something like the above.

There were two ways of creating a world which satisfied these requirements. The first was to just say that the world exists, and start mapping. This was the easiest way, but it wasn't very satisfying. The second and harder way was to generate the world from scratch.

Having decided to follow the harder route I pulled out an old Poul Anderson article and a couple of basic astronomy texts and went to work. After a couple of hours I not only had a suitable planet (with proper reasons for all the above listed conditions) but I had enough facts about it to make reasonable speculations about the societies which might arise upon it.

Since Newtonian physics is not slanted toward any particular role-playing game this method can be used with any rules system. All it requires is an ability to calculate (or punch the keys of a calculator) and a free-floating imagination. If what you are using for a calculator cannot compute base ten logarithms, you will need a table of those as well. If there is no such table in the house, go to a library. You need base ten logs, not natural logs, or if your calculator will only do natural logs then multiply the natural log by 0.4343 to get the base ten log.

The math in this article will be covered but the whys will not be explained. I haven't the ability nor space to begin to cover Astronomy 101. If you come down with a ravenous desire for more information, contact a physics professor at your local university and ask for suggestions for further reading. My own favorite is Abell's *Exploration of the Universe*.

The first step in the creation of a planetary system is the selection of a star. There are seven major types, or spectral classes of stars. O, B, A, F, G, K, and M (Oh Be A Fine Girl, Kiss Me). Each class has a certain range of mass, temper-

illustrations by Brad W. Foster

L WORLD CREATION

talks about the first phase of that process, using the world of Pandora as an example.

ature, and color. The three values are related – knowing a star's mass will help in calculating its temperature, and knowing its temperature will give its color.

Class O, B, and A stars are extremely large and hot, and the hotter the star, the shorter the lifespan. Even the spectral class A stars, the coolest of the three, can expect to burn for only a few hundred million years – just over nine days of Carl Sagan's "Cosmic Calendar." A drop in the bucket of geologic time, not long enough to expect to develop life.

At the other end of the spectrum are the class M stars. These stars are small and relatively cool (3500° Kelvin and less). While they will burn much longer than the class A stars (up to hundreds of billions of years) the chances are that the surface of a planet orbiting them will never get warm enough to support life as we know it.

Thus we're limited to spectral class F, G, or K for our star. Class F stars range in color from blue to white, in temperature from 75000°K to 6000°K and in mass from 1.5 to 1.07 solar units (1.5 to 1.07 times the mass of the sun). Class G stars of which Sol is one, range in color from white to yellow, in temperature from 6000°K to 5000°K, and in mass from 1.02 to 0.77 solar. Class K ranges from orange to red from 5000°K to 3500°K and from 0.75 to 0.40 solar.

To further identify where a given star falls within a given range each class is divided into ten subclasses numbered from 0 to 9. A stellar type is identified by a letter and number Sol is a type G2 star for example.

When considering a prospective sun, remember two things. its mass will affect the length of its planet's year (the more massive the sun the shorter the year) and its temperature will affect the temperature of the planet (the hotter the sun the hotter the planet). For Pandora, the world being described, we have decided we want a shorter year (approx. 256 days) and a somewhat cooler climate (to make possible the icebridge) so we need a sun cooler and less massive than Sol. We'll choose a K3 star with a mass of about 0.62 Solar.

The effect of a star's temperature on a planet is determined by one of the following equations:

a) magnitude = 5.3 - $7\log_{10}$(mass of star in solar units)
b) magnitude = 4.7 - $9.5\log_{10}$(mass of star in solar units)

If the mass of the star is less than 0.45 use equation a, if it is more than 0.70 use equation b, if the mass is between 0.45 and 0.70 use both and average. The mass of Pandora's sun is 0.62, so we'll need to average the results from both. The base ten log of 0.62 (the star's mass) is about -0.21, so:

magnitude = 5.3 - 7(-0.21) and
magnitude = 4,7 - 9.5(-0.21)

or 6.8 and 6.7 respectively. We'll use 6.75, the average.

The relationship of magnitude to brightness is:

magnitude of Sol - mag. of star = 2,51$\log_{10}$(Luminosity)

The absolute magnitude of Sol is 5, Pandora's sun's is 6.75. Substituting and solving for luminosity gives:

(5 - 6.75)/2.5 = $\log_{10}$(luminosity in solar units relative to sol) or -0.7 = $\log_{10}$(luminosity).

To find the number corresponding to this logarithm, either look it up in your table or (if you have a calculator with a variable exponent function) raise ten to that power. Either way, the answer will be about 0.2, so Pandora's sun would be about one fifth as bright in its sky as Sol is in Earth's, if Pandora were as far from its sun as Earth is from Sol.

But a planet receiving only one-fifth the amount of sunlight as Earth would be the equivalent of a planet orbiting somewhere in the asteroid belt in our system, and may be too cold to support life. So we will need to move it in closer, which will shorten its revolutionary period. Ideally, it should be shortened to 0.47 of Earth's years (about 171 twenty-four hour Earth days, or about 256.5 sixteen-hour Pandoran days). So we'll place it at about 0.52 Astronomical Units (1 AU equals about 93 million miles, the average distance between Earth and Sol).

Energy received varies inversely with the square of the distance — half the distance equals four times the heat — as well as directly with brightness, so:

Energy received (Earth normal = 1) = 1/(distance)^2 x brightness.

Substituting:

Energy = 1/(0.52)^2 x 0.2 = 0.74

which means Pandora gets about 0.74 as much energy as Earth does.

The effect of sunlight on a planet's surface temperature cannot be precisely calculated. There are too many other variables to contend with. However, an approximation can be reached by multiplying by the fourth root of the energy received (if your calculator has a square root function but no fourth, or variable, root function, take the square root of the square root). The fourth root of 0.74 is about 0.93, times 15°C (the average temperature of the Earth's surface) giving about 14°C. While one degree is not a large drop, this combined with a lessened axial tilt (to be discussed later) could account for the existence of the icebridge needed to satisfy the first of the listed required planetary conditions.

Now to determine the length of the planetary year. For purely numerological reasons, we want a year of about 256 days. First we need to convert that figure to Earth-years. 256 - sixteen hour days is about equal to 177 twenty-four hour days, or 0.47 Earth-years. This is the value we need to obtain.

The actual revolutionary period of a planet varies inversely with the square root of the mass of its sun and directly with the square root of the cube of the distance from its sun (expressed in AU's). The equation then would be:

$(1/\sqrt{\text{(Mass of its sun in Solar)}}) \times \sqrt{(\text{distance in AU's})^3}$

Substituting the values pertaining to the Pandora system we get:

$(1/\sqrt{(0.62)} \times \sqrt{(0.52)^3} = 1.27 \times 0.27 = 0.47$

If your planet doesn't work out this smoothly don't worry, Pandora didn't the first time either. If you alter the star's mass to get the year length you want you should then recalculate the brightness of the star and climate of the planet. If you alter the distance to its sun to get the desired year length then you need only recalculate the planet's climate.

One way to get larger fliers is to increase the air pressure. Another is to lower the gravity. With Pandora we'll do both. Pandora will be about three-fourths the size of Terra, but about 1.2 times as dense. This makes for a slightly less massive planet while giving it an abundance of heavier metals, especially the radioactive ones.

So far, our planet is orbiting a slightly cooler star, with a planetary year of about 256 sixteen-hour days. What is left? An icebridge linking the continents and larger flying creatures.

By lessening the axial tilt of the planet to about 5°, we cause the northern portions to remain perpetually cool. There will be no warm season to melt the ice or even soften it. The generally cooler temperature of the planet will aid in the formation of an icebridge from about the 60th parallel to the poles.

One way to get larger fliers is to increase the air pressure. Another is to lower the gravity. With Pandora we'll do both. Pandora will be about three-fourths the size of Terra, but about 1.2 times as dense. This makes for a slightly less massive planet while giving it an abundance of heavier metals, especially the radioactive ones. The gravitational pull varies with both size and density, so gravity on Pandora is 0.75 times 1.2 Terran, or about 0.9 Terran. Among the benefits of lower gravity is that smaller wing area is needed to lift the same mass.

The hotter core and the faster rotation of Pandora will combine to produce a strong magnetic field which will have a major effect. If will tend to ward off stellar particles which, if left to their own devices, will pry gas molecules out of our atmosphere. With protecion against the great majority of these particles, it is logical to assume Pandora will retain much more atmosphere and therefore a higher atmospheric pressure.

So we'll increase the air pressure to about 1.8 atmospheres, roughly 53.85 inches of mercury. With more air to push against, wings work more efficiently.

With less wing area needed to produce lift and denser air making wings even more efficient, larger animals are able to take to the air. The last requirement is satisfied.

Pandora has one satellite giving off a slightly bluish light, in an almost perfectly geosynchronous orbit. Its mass does not significantly affect the surface of Pandora.

But what effect will a moon have on a planet? It will tend to affect (slow) its rotation. How much and in what way has never been proven, so no ready formula exists to calculate it. Mars, with two moons, rotates much slower — and backwards as well! Any assumption seems to be reasonable.

A moon will revolve close to parallel with the equatorial plane of its planet, and will increase the oblation (the bulge) along the plane of revolution. Its period can be calculated using the same tables as the planet, substituting moon and planet for planet and star, and making all measurements in terms of Luna and Terra rather than Terra and Sol.

So, Pandora now has all the features specified at the start. What else can be discovered about the planet?

There are no seasonal changes on Pandora. This will play a big part in shaping the attitudes of the societies which will arise on this world. There will be no see-saw struggle between the night and the day. Our two biggest religious holidays occur near winter solstice, that point where night ceases to eat up the day and begins even to retreat from it, and the spring equinox, where day for the first time begins to exceed night.

Because of a lack of seasons there will be no birth-death-rebirth cycle among the vegetation. Because of this the societies which form may have no thought of an afterlife. Death will be thought an absolute end. Resurrections will be practiced by only the most perverse religions, and whole sects may arise whose main purpose is to return those vile abominations, the raised, to the grave in which they belong.

Also because of a lack of seasonal changes, food preservation techniques will be almost unheard of. With every season a growing season, the planting of crops can be staggered so a desired foodstuff is always being harvested. Only people who travel into the cold north or the desert need to preserve food, and since they are not common, neither is the technique.

Since the northern reaches are always cold and barren, a hunting and fishing economy akin to the Eskimos would arise. Also a very strict hospitality code could be formed. In a land where a frozen death waits around every corner, no man would care to be refused warmth and food, hence no man would refuse them to another.

From the higher concentration of heavy metals on Pandora we can infer a hotter core. The smaller size means the heat will be passed to the surface faster, causing a larger number of volcanoes and earthquakes (Pandoraquakes?). Radioactive ores might be the charms shamans make their 'death magic' around, while the only protection from such 'deathstones' would be a 'life-metal' (lead) shield.

The rapid rotation leads to stronger coriolis forces, which in turn will cause more cyclones and tornadoes in particular, and more drastic, changeable weather in general.

The lighter gravity will mean many changes. People will grow slightly taller. Mountains will be taller and steeper.

Falling will take longer, and does less damage. Air pressure will fall off less rapidly as well. It will be 20,000 feet before the atmosphere thins to half density, rather than 18,000 as on Terra.

Combine the lesser gravity with an atmosphere almost twice as dense as Terra's and it means life (as we know it) can exist at altitudes almost twice as high as on Terra.

The greater proportion of heavy metals combined with a faster rotation means Pandora has a stronger magnetic field. This might lead to lodestones meing more common than on Terra, which in turn might lead to an earlier discovery and harnessing of magnetic forces. That could mean anything from the earlier invention of the compass to magnetic arrowheads, perhaps even to the rudiments of electricity.

This strong magnetic field would interact with the stellar particles to produce showy auroras with plenty of radio interference.

And, while the slight red shift of all colors due to the ginger-colored sun would be natural to the characters, descriptions emphasizing that shift can help to remind the players they are not on Terra and that other laws apply here they should be aware of.

We began with five conditions that needed to be met. In the process of meeting them, we have discovered many other things about our planet, as well as the people who dwell on it. A well-created and thought out planet will almost design its natives itself.

Creating planets doesn't take long (generating Pandora took about fifteen minutes on a calculator and about an hour and a half of speculation) but it adds tremendously to the background detail of a campaign, helping to make it all the more believable.□

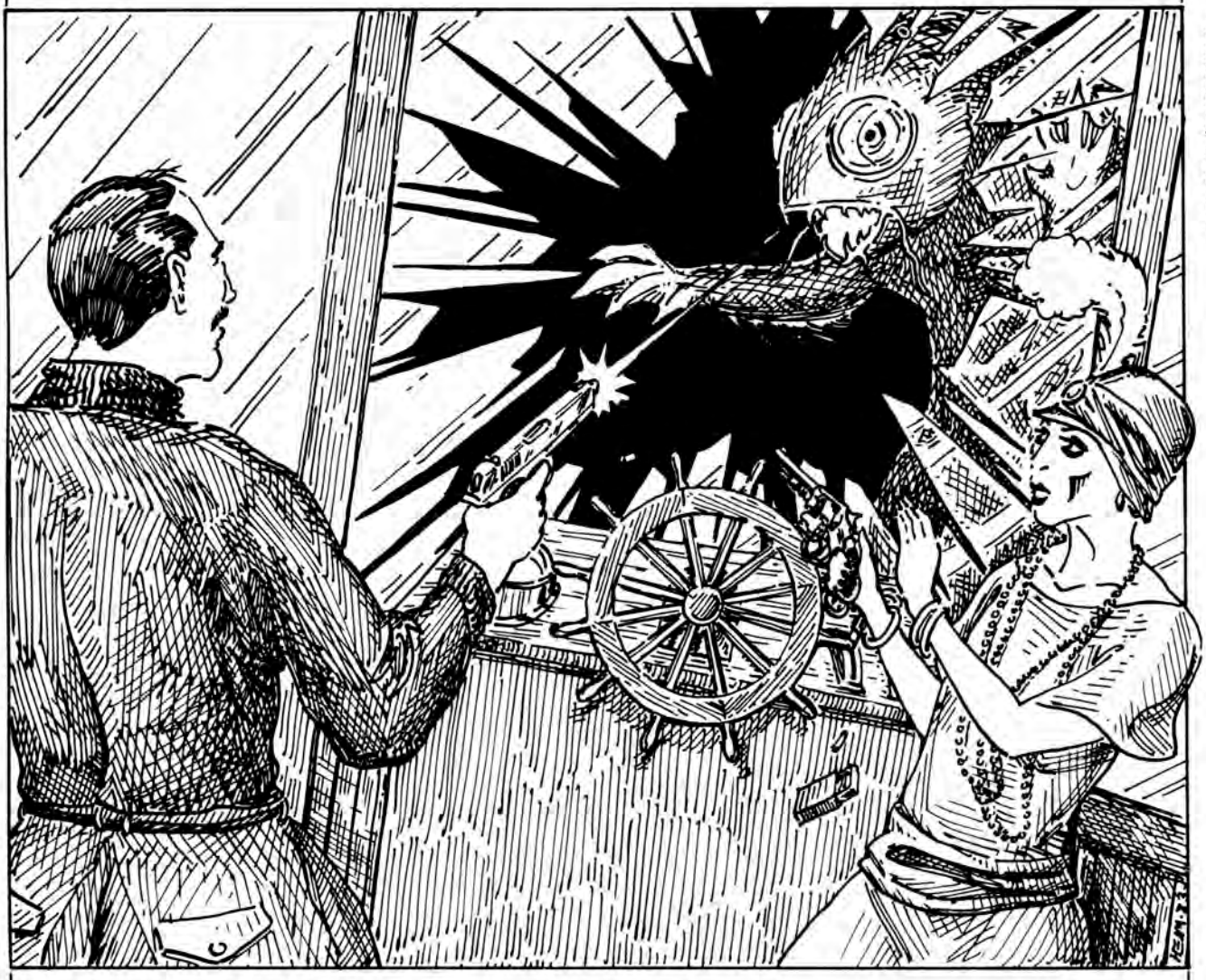

illustration by Max Heim

Variant Combat Rules

for Call of Cthulhu

by Paul Montgomery Crabaugh

Dick Wagenet's article in *DW19* served to crystallize my own doubts about the *Call of Cthulhu* combat system – there did seem to be some room for improvement. However, my own preferences led more towards altering the details of the existing system rather than making such changes as he had proposed.

There are some points I felt should be addressed and which have so far escaped attention. One of these is illegal weapons. If this was *Traveller*, the subject would scarcely come up. Law enforcement is sufficiently inconsistent and disinterested that players are armed to match convenience and preference.

The police in the United States and the rest of the world in this era are somewhat less forgiving of minor violations of official restrictions on heavy weaponry. In addition, the players should be reasonably law-abiding sorts, not inclined to push the matter. For that reason, automatic rifles, machine pistols, Thompson SMG's, grenades, and poison gas should be discouraged as player weapons. If the players insist on equipping themselves in such a manner, don't hesitate to throw a few of them in jail as soon as a policeman finds them in possession of the offensive items.

That brings up the subject of concealment. One of the reasons – maybe the primary reason – that a person would choose a light weapon in the real world is that it is harder to spot. Therefore, each weapon described below will have a concealment factor associated with it. If the character

shows himself in public while carrying the weapon (presumably having at least had the sense to conceal it in waistband, shoulder holster, or purse), there is a chance that the person will be spotted and detained by a police officer while the person explains why he/she needs to carry firearms. The concealment factor is a multiple for a Luck roll to avoid this unfortunate circumstance. POW x 5, for example, indicates a normal Luck roll of 5 times Power. POW x 2 means twice Power — and a weapon slightly on the bulky side. POW x 0 means a weapon that cannot plausibly be concealed anywhere. Also add the character's SIZ to the percentage chance.

Some characters won't mind being spotted. Private investigators, for example, generally have a license to carry a weapon. On the other hand, noone has a license to carry a sawed-off shotgun — the only overtly illegal weapon on the list below. I wouldn't include it except that it is also the only illegal weapon easily made by a character out of a legal weapon.

As a general rule, weapons carried in a vehicle are not of much concern, as are guns carried in baggage. Also there are few restrictions on carrying weapons away from civilized areas.

Other than minor fiddling with range, damage and such, there are only two major changes on the Firearms Table that I would like to make. One is a modifier to the To Hit chance. Some weapons within a general class of weapons just happen to be more accurate than others. This is generally a function of a larger barrel or less recoil, and is reflected by the modifiers. For instance, a character with the Handgun skill at 35% would fire a .22 revolver at 45% and a .45 automatic at 25%.

The other major change is in the rate of fire. It still works the same way it did in the original rules, indicating the number of rounds that can be fired per melee round, but there is more variety in numbers. The shotguns go off at proportional equivalent dexterities. For example, a character with a DEX of 15, firing a .22 revolver, with a rate-of-fire (ROF) of 3, will get off his first shot at DEX 15, his second at DEX 10 and his third at DEX 5. To calculate the equivalent DEX when it's not clear, divide the character's DEX by the ROF and subtract the result (rounded off) from the original DEX until every round has been accounted for. If the character in the example above had a DEX of 13 instead of 15, the result would be: 13/3 = 4 1/3, or 4,

Now I would like to introduce several rules that should enhance the realism without much complexity.

To add to the effects of being hit by a slug, simply compare the number of damage points inflicted (including any absorbed by armor, where appropriate) to the victim's SIZ. If the damage exceeds the SIZ, the target is stunned and may do nothing for the remainder of the melee round (except absorb more damage). If the damage is twice the SIZ or greater, the target is flung directly backwards one square/hex/body length/whatever.

Strength should affect the firing of guns. For an experiment (thought-experiment only, I hasten to add), consider giving a .45 Peacemaker to a 6-year-old. The ability to hold the gun steadily in the face of the recoil can be extremely important. Therefore, characters with a strength of 6 or less should subtract 1 from the rate of fire of any pistol they may choose to make use of, and should not be allowed to use .45's at all (except at a 5% chance to hit). Characters with a strength in excess of or equal to 16, should get to add 1 to their ROF with any pistol. (Rifles and shotguns are more easily braced and aimed, making strength less important in dealing with them.)

A change in the point-blank rules would also be useful, to eliminate the spectre of two antagonists emptying their guns at each other in a broom closet without scoring any damage. For that, Mr. Wagenet's rule is entirely adequate, to wit: double the To Hit probability at half range, triple it at 1/3 range and so forth. (This tends to drive up the hits scored in close combat rather quickly; you might prefer an exponential scale instead: doubled at ½ range, tripled at ¼ range, quadrupled at 1/8 range.)

Incidentally, for the purposes of gaining experience, use the current percentage of a character in the general class of weapon, not the specific weapon after special modifications: for example, a character with Handgun at 30% successfully uses a .22 revolver, with which he has a 40% to hit chance. Whether he gets better with handguns is based on the 30% Handgun skill, not the 40% chance for using a .22.

One final note, on bookkeeping: since guns are called upon to absorb damage fairly rarely, it is possible to use their "Breakage" column on the character sheet for other purposes. A good idea is to record the equivalent DEX's that the character will be able to fire that weapon on, thus saving considerable time in the heat of battle.

Of course, this whole discussion is probably academic, whichever system you use you still will not inflict any damage on Cthulhu.□

Firearms Table

Weapon	*Concealment*	*Damage*	*ROF*	*To Hit*	*Range*	*HP*	*Ammo*	*Cost*
.22 revolver	POWx5	1D6	3	+10	25	4	6	15
.22 automatic	POWx5	1D6	4	+5	20	3	9	20
.32 revolver	POWx4	1D8	2	+5	30	8	6	20
.32 Automatic	POWx4	1D8	3	0	25	6	9	25
.38 revolver	POWx3	1D8+1	2	0	35	9	6	25
.38 automatic	POWx3	1D8+1	3	-5	30	7	7	30
.45 revolver	POWx2	1D10+2	1	-5	45	12	6	35
.45 automatic	POWx2	1D10+2	2	-10	40	9	7	40
.22 bolt	POWx0	1D8	2	+5	50	10	5	25
.30-06 bolt	POWx0	1D10+3	1	0	100	12	5	50
20-gauge double	POWx0	1D6*	½†	0	50	12	2	50
20-gauge pump	POWx0	1D6*	2	-5	50	12	5	50
12-gauge double	POWx0	1D8*	½†	0	30	12	2	50
12-gauge pump	POWx0	1D8*	2	-5	30	12	5	50
Sawed-off	POWx1	1D10*	½†	+10	10	12	2	50

† these guns can either fire both barrels at one target (essentially giving one attack at double damage) or each barrel separately.

** the damage on these weapons varies with range. At greater than normal range up to double range, the damage is halved; up to triple range, one-quarter damage and so forth. At ½ range or less, damage is doubled; at ¼ or less, tripled; at 1/8 quadrupled. Note that the two are not equivalent; at long range the damage increases arithmetically — more slowly. This is deliberate. Damage should never be more than quadrupled.*

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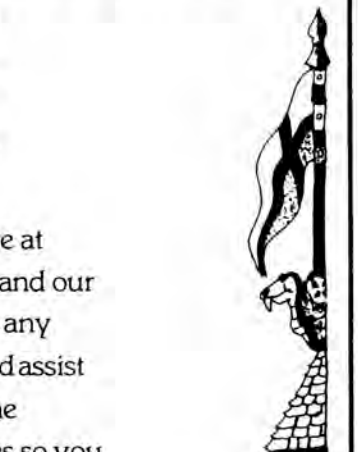

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Dalcon '83, PO Box 59899, Dallas TX 75229.

UNICORN I June 10-12, 1983
Lexington Catholic H S, Lexington, KY
Unicorn I, PO Box 12666, Lexington, KY 40583.

GENGHIS CON V June 17-19, 1983
Denver, CO
Denver Gamers Association, PO Box 2945, Littleton, CO 80161.

KOMMAND CON '83 June 18-19, 1983
Ohio Natl Guard Armory, Mansfield, OH
Kommander's Wargaming Club, PO Box 2235, Mansfield, OH 44905.

EASTCON '83 June 24-26, 1983
Glassboro State College, Glassboro, NJ
Eastcon, PO Box 139, Middleton, NJ 07748.

POLYCON June 24-26, 1983
Cal Poly State U, San Luis Obispo, CA
Society of Wizards and Warriors, PO Box 168, San Luis Obispo, CA 93407.

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Villa Capri Motor Hotel, Austin, TX
David Ladyman, Texcon 1983, 8028 Gessner no1805, Austin, TX 78753.

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Cobo Hall, Detroit, MI
Metro Detroit Gamers, 2616 Kenwyck, Troy, MI 48098.

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Stouffers Greenway Plaza Hotel, Houston TX
Nan's Game Hq, 118 Briargrove Center, 6100 Westheimer, Houston, TX 77057.

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Omacon 3, 2518 S 167th St, Omaha, NE 68130.

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Univ. Wisconsin-Parkside, Kenosha, WI
Gen Con Game Convention, c/o TSR Hobbies, Inc., PO Box 756, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin 53147.

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Sheraton Anaheim Hotel, Anaheim, CA
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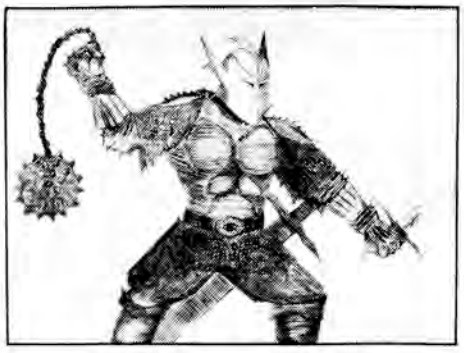

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Adventure by Design

Gamemastering ideas, philosophy, role-playing tips, and scenario design.

GAMEMASTERING ON A BUDGET

by Ken Rolston

Ideally, the GM should attempt to provide the maximum challenge while employing minimal resources in designing the opposition.

Most scenarios feature opponents who are more numerous, powerful, and hansomely outfitted than the player-characters. Typically, a mixed group of low-level characters is ambushed by a wizard with a fireball wand and a skirmish line of orcs, or perhaps a party is called upon to assault a dungeon whose construction could represent an expenditure of time and wealth roughly equivalent to the gross national product of a small nation for several years. A great deal of credit is due the GM who can create a challenging adventure using no more power and resources than are available to the player-characters.

Primitive, ill-equipped goblins, only armed with shields, spears, and short bows have to use all the resources at their disposal to stay alive. A possible defense usually involves some of the goblins hiding themselves in descending side passages while the bulk of the tribe rushes deeper into the cavern ahead of the player-characters. Suddenly the main body of goblins surges into a large open chamber beyond the range of the player-characters' lights. From behind the party comes a small shower of arrows. Turning to deal with the threat the torch bearing party members find themselves to be well-lit targets in a crossfire. The players face a dilemma: should they extinguish the lights and fumble their way out in the dark, or use the lamps to illuminate their retreat, providing perfect targets for the pursuers. The lowly goblin, outmatched in abilities and technology, becomes a formidable force when utilizing the features of his native habitat.

Weak Antagonists

Many unusual and original adventures can be inspired by designing a scenario around an antagonist or setting that is considered to be weak. Several fine examples of this can be found in the *Trollpak RQ* scenarios; here the feeble trollkin, doormat of the troll community, suddenly becomes a serious problem for experienced and well-equipped adventurers. But how can a GM make an admittedly weak opponent challenge the player-characters? This is where the GM gets a chance to exercise his ingenuity.

The difference between the players' impression of the opponent and the opponent's real strength should be played upon. A vulnerable adversary may appear very threatening; this is a typical strategy in nature, where creatures swell up like balloons or bristle with spines when confronted. Another method is to make an opponent seem very weak while his strengths can be discerned only with experience. For example, I favor weakly-armed, frail creatures who are nonetheless incredibly accurate in their attacks. Since they almost never miss, it doesn't matter that they can only do half the damage that the PCs can do in a single blow. A further daring strategy is the bluff, where a low-powered character pretends to be a high-powered, and the cautious players find themselves bested by an underwhelming challenger.

There are several ways to extend the warranty on weak creatures. Focus on durability and defense rather than offensive capability when creating and equipping them. Give them a lot of hit points, but don't bother giving them pointed objects. Make healing available to the lowlives; it always seems unfair that no cleric is ever out there healing the orcs that I'm hacking on. Emphasize the virtue of tactical retreat.

The GM can also compensate for the relative weakness of his forces by exploiting the inherent advantages of the referee's role – superior intelligence, knowledge of the terrain, knowledge of the opponent, concealment of his own powers and resources, and reliable communications and organization among his forces. It is only tasteful to exploit these advantages, however, if the gamemaster can rationalize them as consistent with the scenario. For example, to allow the GM's forces to to act as though they know the abilities of the player-characters is only fair if the GM forces have some reasonable access to this information. Of course, that is the job of the GM – to set the background of the scenario up in such a way that he can conscientiously capitalize on these advantages. The GM forces should have at least the benefit of familiarity with their own turf.

Weakening the PCs

Another entertaining approach is to force a stronger party to surrender its advantages in order to close with the object of its hostility. Sometimes the surrender is involuntary; the party is put to sleep, stripped of its armor and magic weapons, and set loose in an arena full of angry kobold mothers seeking revenge for the slaughter of their offspring. It is better yet when the PCs voluntarily weaken themselves because they know they cannot even engage the opponent unless they do it on his terms. A party may voluntarily choose to pursue the goblins into the darkness of their cave, accepting the handicap of blindness.

The reversal of typical player-GM roles that takes place when the opposition becomes the underdog introduces a novel perspective for the FRP gamer. It is conventional for the forces of evil to be identified with an abundance of power; the implication is that power corrupts. Alternatively, the players may be presented with a situation in which they hold all the cards, and their opposition must manage to stay alive only by its wits and courage. How will the players handle themselves? Will they tend to mirror the evil they supposedly have sought to overcome? On one hand, they may find that circumstances can force good men to distasteful extremes in the interests of justice and security. On the other hand, the mystique of the underdog rapidly dissipates when the underdog is a repulsive villain.

A perfect setting for repulsive villains is the comic-book-hero worlds of *Champions, Villains and Vigilantes,* and *Superworld,* where we may encounter a psychopathic maniac slaughtering innocent bystanders by the hundreds. Though it may be a bold-spirited and grand deed for a single man without superpowers or resources to challenge the combined forces of the law enforcement agents and notable superheroes of a great city, it doesn't mean that we must respect the villain, or that the forces for good should restrain their efforts in any misguided sense of fair play.

Turning PCs into Bullies

Another effective way to give players a fresh perspective on their roles is to turn the tables on them: send a weak but valorous group of kobolds to try to eliminate the brutal humans who have oppressed their countrymen. Send groups of bold guerillas to harrass a party along its line of approach to the siege of a castle. Let them see how hard it is to defend against determined ambushers skilled at hit-and-run tactics. Don't allow the players to asume they are the only ones expected to show courage and cleverness; being on the wrong side of a dispute should not limit the GM's characters ot unimaginative and ineffective strategies.

There are many practical rewards for the restrained gamemaster. Most pleasing is the relative ease of managing a weaker force. The gamemaster's pleasure is too often diminished because of the sheer bulk of the resources he must juggle. The player is usually responsible for one character's actions; the gamemaster may have to decide how ten different NPCs react in the time that the player has to consider his one character's options. By comparison, what a pleasure it is for the gamemaster to have a single figure to manage.

For the final of the *RuneQuest* tournament at Origins '82 I designed a scenario to pit the party of eight competent player-characters against a single well-prepared assassin. The party was distinctly at a disadvantage, despite their superior numbers and resources; I didn't have to organize, discuss plans, or coordinate varied talents and dispositions. For once. as a gamemaster I did not feel I was too hopelessly bogged down in detail to enjoy the tournament scenario.

Aside from the numerous practical benefits of designing adventures with restraint, there are also the aesthetic values. It is simply more tasteful to limit yourself; there is dignity and honor in giving your players a tough challenge while using half the power that other gamemasters usually use. "Less is more," as architect Mies Van Der Rohe said. It is the highest compliment to hear from the gamers, sighing at the completion of a difficult quest,"Gee, I'm glad we didn't have to deal with anything really dangerous . . . ." □

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Advice from Rurik

RuneQuest rules questions? Send them to: Advice from Rurik, Box 6302-DW, Albany, CA 94706-0302. Enclose SASE.

Question: Do Rune priests defend with their full POW at all times as do Rune lords?
Answer: No, priests defend with whatever POW they have during magical combat. Rune lords get the POW support because they are not magic users and don't have the benefits of shielding spells.
Q: If a character with a POW of 18 and a Spirit Block 1 spell up is attacked by a spirit with POW 20 would he be able to bind it if he was successful in his couter-attack roll?
A: Binding must be done against the full POW of the spirit. Think of it as coming over the wall of the Spirit Block to wrestle with the spirit. SB is only defensive.
Q: There is a skill in the *Cults of Prax* called Identify Plants (Aldrya), but it does not state what this skill does. Also in *Griffin Mountain* it states in the begining Balazaring player-character skills list that there is a skill called Identify Healing Plants. Is this a new skill (if so please clarify), or is it the same as the Chalana Arroy Find Healing Plants?
A: Identify Plants means exactly what it says; the character can use it to identify plants. Everyone has at least 5% in the skill but it takes a roll to determine just what kind of grass, pine tree, oak tree, etc., one is looking at. Elves are very good with this skill. Identify Healing Plants and Find Healing Plants are the same skill.
Q: Can a vampire use the healing spell to heal fire damage before the next holy night? Can a vampire in smoke form be hurt if you rip the smoke with your sword?
A: Yes, a vampire can use healing spells to cure fire damage. No, only a Truesworded weapon would harm a smokey vampire.
Q: About detections and dispelling magic. If I think an enemy has Bladesharp 4 on his weapon can I try to dispel it or must I cast a Detect Magic spell first? An opponent has Protection 4 and a Fanaticism on his body, I cast a Dispel Magic 4 at him, what happens? Can you give us a general rule for such situations?
A: Dispel must be aimed at the particular effects observed by the caster. Thus the caster can say, "Dispel the magic making that guy hit so hard," in hopes that he has enough Dispel Magic to do the job. In cases where there is more than one spell on the target, the smaller spell goes down first.
Q: Do player characters have to drop activities such as adventuring and training in order to partake in Sacred Time ceremonies?
A: Yes, drop everything and worship. However, one can maintain a minimum participation and still have a regular life. Of course, many Cults have no particular need to have ceremonies during Sacred Time. However, initiates and up who miss ceremonies can be in deep trouble.
Q: A power-storage crystal is also a spirit-tapping crystal. Is the power storage limit of the crystal also a limit on the POW of the spirit which can be trapped in it?
A: Any power-storage crystal can hold any spirit.
Q: I also have a rules-question to make. If a person has 90% attack with his hands, shouldn't he then be able to parry with his hands, since he is a master? If so, is his beginning parry ability 25% plus parry bonus? I also think that he should not get hurt if he parries, since when you parry a weapon with your bare hands, you actually parry on your foe's arm(s). Furthermore, I think that all this should apply on legs (i.e. kick) as well. I'm very interested in knowing your opinion in this matter.
A: A character may improve with hand parry, just as he improves with fist, with separate experience rolls and training. Actually, you parry a foe's arm with your hand if you are lucky or especially skilled. I would say that, as a rule, a successful hand parry forces the attacker to hit the arm and its armor and any left over damage then goes to the rolled location. It might also be possible to establish a separate skill of Bare-Hand Parry, probably needing no more than three points of armor on the arm, which can be used to parry without taking damage.
Q: Can Oratory be used on a Befuddled opponent to fight against his friends?
A: Yes, but the player must present a reasonable line of argument for the character to react to.
Q: With regard to Countermagic and Morale, can a PC thwart the leader's casting of the Morale spell by applying Coutermagic 4 to himself? What if the character already has cast Shield 2?
A: Thwarting a Morale spell would be unthinkable. Since it takes a whole day's service to prepare it will either be cast (or released, more likely) on the character or else the person has not attended the ceremony and thereby avoided the spell. Humakt will not allow last-second thoughts by his followers on the battlefield.
Q: The Daka Fal Summon Specific Ancestor spell "will call a specific ancestor spirit already known to the summoner." Must this be an ancestor previously summoned by the Summon Ancestor spell, or is there another way to get acquainted with one's ancestors?
A: A genealogy skill is possible in summoning specific ancestors. In fact, one must know the entire correct genealogy back to known specific ancestors if they are to be summoned. It is not enough to know that you are George Drab's descendant. You must know the name and a recognition label for every generation, and then must properly recite it to summon the spirit desired. Or have a spirit known by a randomly cast spell.
Q: What happens when the Harmonize spell is successfully Reflected upon its caster?
A: The caster will stand stock still for the duration of the spell.
Q: Is it true that a greatsword held in front of a fighter for defense purposes cannot strike a blow harder than a broadsword's?
A: This actually depends on how the greatsword is held. If the weapon is held with both hands placed together, as many greatsword fighters use them, after the model of the Japanese *katana*, then yes, that's all the damage they will do. However, that is not how the practiced greatsword fighter will use his weapon.

Most European greatswords, such as those used by the Swiss and German mercenaries at the end of the Middle Ages, were built with hilts that allowed for some separation of the hands on the hilt, and then built with a secondary set of quillons (crossguards) further up the blade, where an armored mitt could grasp the blade to get more distance between his hands.

This grip distance allows for much better leverage with the weapon, virtually making it into a quarterstaff. The power of the lever action, with the bottom hand providing the movement and the top hand providing the fulcrum, can be immense. The fulcrum hand will also be moving in such an attack, adding even more impetus to the strike.
Q: An initiate must have a POW 15+ to become a Rune lord. Yet, as a Rune lord, he can use his own form of Divine Intervention and go below POW 15 without losing his status as a Rune lord. Why? After all, a Rune priest going below POW 18 is no longer a Rune priest.
A: Rune lords may use DI to go below 15 and still retain their status because they are different from priests. Effectively, their use of DI permanently implants them in the mind of the deity and the god looks out for them.
Q: Just which spells are considered attack spells for treasure factors?
A: Actually, this refers to any spell useful in combat, including things such as Extinguish.
Q: Could you, if you used a Discorporation spell to possess another creature, then kill it and return to your own body?
A: No. A discorporated spirit must engage in spirit combat, and if it inhabits another body the first body will die before the spell is over.
Q: When a character becomes a Rune priest, what happens to those Rune spells that he has for one time use? Will they become reusable without POW sacrifice?
A: The one-use spells become reusable without POW sacrifice.
Q: Do Rune magic matrices exist? *Cults of Prax*, p. 23, in the Saga of Bituran Varosh, states: "The chieftainess got a silver tiara with a spell matrix for Reflection on it," which seems to indicate that they do, but only battle magic matrices are mentioned in the rules. How are Rune spell matrices made, and how do they work?
A: Rune magic matrices are made by sacrificing for the spell plus Matrix creation, then using Divine Intervention as well to get the spell into the matrix. A priest from the same cult can use the matrix as if he had sacrificed for the spell. An initiate of the cult can use the matrix by permanently sacrificing the POW for the spell every time he uses it. It cannot be used by anyone outside the cult.
Q: Can a character involved in spirit combat use either Rune or battle magic?
A: You can throw Rune spells under spirit combat, but not battle magic. However, you can ignore the spirit attacks (it still attacks using its normal chance). You can't use your POW for anything but resisting the spirit.

Next Issue: Steve Perrin will explain the work being done on the third edition of **RuneQuest**.□

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Reviews

This column reviews new games, system additions, campaign descriptions, scenario packs and other role-playing supplements.

STAR FRONTIERS

edited by Steve Winter
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Reviewed by Ian R. Beste

TSR joins the space age with *Star Frontiers*, a science fiction role-playing game that has been billed in its large advertising campaign as having required years of development. Given the contents of the product, one may wonder where those years went. *Star Frontiers* is by no stretch of the imagination a step forward in the state of the art. There just isn't a whole lot to the game.

Star Frontiers gives you a lot of components and physical quality for your money. The contents include: Basic Game Rules, Expanded Game Rules, module SF-0 entitled "Crash on Volturnus," a 17" by 10½" Starship Bridge Area Map with a map of the planet Volturnus on the back, a 23" by 35" map of a futuristic city with eight smaller terrain-type maps on the back, and 185 thin-board counters. All components except for the module have extensive full-color production, and liberal use of good artwork. In fact, the rules are very well laid out, with illustrations of the equipment helping the players to better visualize what they are doing. The city and tactical maps can be easily adopted to other games, though players may wish to convert the square grid to a hexagonal grid. The game also comes with two ten-sided dice and a crayon for filling in the numbers. These are the only dice required in the game.

The actual material is another story entirely. There isn't much to the Basic Game rules other than a character generation and combat system. Characters have eight abilities, arranged in pairs – Strength/Stamina, Dexterity/Reaction Speed, Intuition/Logic, and Personality/Leadership. Scores for these abilities are determined by rolling percentile dice and consulting a table that generates a base value ranging from 30 to 70, averaging 45 to 50. The player then chooses which one of four races his or her character is going to be. Besides being a Human, a player-character can be a Yazirian (a chimpanzee-like being with folds of skin under the arms that allow him to glide like a flying squirrel), a Dralasite (a blobby creature with shape-changing abilities), or a Vrusk (an eight-legged carapaced insect). Race modifies some of the character's abilities, but every plus in one ability is matched by a minus in another. Combat is simple. First both sides roll to see who has initiative. The side with initiative may move and then attack, then the side without initiative may move and attack. In the Basic Rules, movement is measured in squares on the city map. The basic chance to hit is the player's Dexterity, minus modifiers for range and whether or not one is in a skimmer (a hovercraft car). There is a bounce diagram for grenades that miss. Damage is determined by weapon type and is subtracted from the character's Stamina. There are also uncomplicated rules for ammunition use, recovering stamina, and NPC reactions. All this is contained in five pages.

Following the character generation and combat portion, the rest of the Basic Game rules is given over mostly to adventures. There is also a half page on equipment (mostly weapons), a glossary, and a short section on the metric system. The adventures call for a reader who exercises limited gamemastering functions – i.e. reading to players the results of their actions, and then asking them what they wish to do next. At which point the players get to choose from a short list of choices. The Basic Game rules result in a game very similar to GDW's *Snapshot*, simple-minded shoot-'em-up role-playing.

The Expanded Game rules add touches of complexity. Character generation now adds an initial finances roll, lets players modify ability scores (essentially, trading points between abilities), provides some unique racial characteristics, and gives skills. A dralasite's special racial abilities are Elasticity (skin stretching) and Lie Detection, a vrusk's are Ambidexterity and Comprehension, a yazirian's are Battle Rage and Gliding, a human is simply able to add five points to any one ability. These provide a little touch of alienness to characters – but not much. As for skills, there are three Primary Skill Areas (PSAs): Military, Technological, and Biosocial. When rolling up a character, a player chooses two skills, one from the character's chosen PSA and one from any PSA. The military PSA has seven skills, the technological and biosocial three each. Many of the skills are then broken down into subskills. This is a handy way of distinguishing between activities that are related but vary in difficulty. For example, a character with Medical skill (part of the biosocial PSA) has a 60% base chance with the Diagnosis subskill, 40% with Minor Surgery, 50% with Controlling Infection, and only 20% with Major Surgery. This approach is close to the idea in SPI's *Universe*, wherein each skill has a number of associated "tasks," each of which has a different chance of success. However, *Star Frontiers* carries it off more clearly. Skills may be improved by experience points (XPs). As player-characters gain XPs, they can trade them in for increased ability scores at one ability point per XP or apply them to raising skills. Skills start at Level 0, and can be raised to a maximum of Level 6. The level adds as a modifier to the chance of successfully using a skill. As a character increases his skill level, it requires more XPs to reach a higher level. It costs double the XPs to go up a level if the skill is not in the character's chosen PSA. Military skills cost the least to increase, biosocial the most. The number of skills and subskills is by no means extensive, but covers the basics: weapons use, computers, repair, medicine, social skills.

The rules for movement are no longer restricted to squares. There is a movement table with distances in meters and kilometers, a terrain effects table, rules for encumbrance, special actions (leaping, falling, swimming, etc.) and gravity or its absence thereof.

Combat is significantly changed. Both sides roll for initiative, intended actions are announced, the side without initiative announcing first, then movement is carried out, the side without initiative again going first, giving the other side a chance to fire at any moving character. This is followed by "wrestling," grenades, any remaining firing attempts and melee. This cumbersome procedure may be fine for a tactical wargame like *Squad Leader* but just tends to be boring

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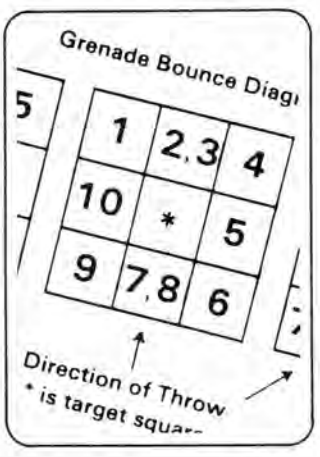
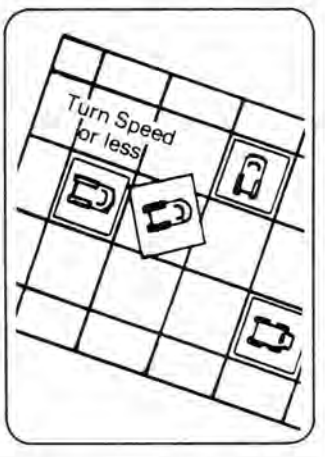




in actual play. Action by Reaction Speed count works better. (Take the Reaction Speed and divide by five to get an Action Rank.)

The basic chance for hitting someone with a ranged weapon is now equal to *half* a character's dexterity plus his skill level times ten. This results in some absurdly low chances to hit. But more on this later. The combat rules account for automatic hits and misses, prone targets, weightlessness, rates of fire, crowds, explosives, melee, animals, and robots.

In the "Damage" section players now get to choose armor, which comes in two varieties, suits and screens, characters being able to wear no more than one of each at a time. Screens require energy (measured throughout the game in standard energy units or SEUs). The different sorts of armor defend against different sorts of weapons: albedo suits and screens against laser weapons, skeinsuits and inertia screens against projectile and gyrojet weapons, gauss screens against electrical attacks, and sonic screens against sonic weapons. Unlike other science fiction games, there are no battle suits that provide some protection against all forms of attack. Characters have to decide what to protect against and what to expose themselves to.

There is a short section on vehicles and vehicle combat, a topic not treated this well in other science fiction RPGs, though one could easily adopt Steve Jackson's *Car Wars* if necessary. Still, these vehicle rules enable players to adventure in futuristic metropolises. Flying combat and movement are also covered.

The two and a half page section on "Creating Creatures" plus the two and a half pages of creature descriptions are unnerving. Rather than a *Traveller*-like die-rolling and table creation system, the referee is given a list of considerations for creature design. This list is set up to produce creatures that should be more than just weapons, armor and speed. However, the section with creature descriptions is almost exactly like that of the *AD&D Monster Manual* and *Fiend Folio*. One wishes the section on creature design had also been included in the *Monster Manual*.

A long "Equipment" section follows. Weapons, ammunition, armor, tool kits, computers, robots, power generators, and miscellaneous equipment are all well described. Some information that should be listed on the two pages of charts that start the section is buried in the text (computer cost for example). A good touch is an actual listing of what is inside the various tool kits. For instance, in a techkit you will find: a socket wrench, an open end wrench, an electrodrive (a futuristic screwdriver), wire, a prybar, a jack, a hammer, bonding materials, "500 nuts, bolts, clamps, screws, and nails," ten hoses of assorted sizes, snips, spray lubricant, and spray waterproofing. And all this weighs only 20 kilograms.

The section on "Frontier Societies" includes a map of the Frontier Sector, a listing of planetary data (resident race, population and trade status, gravity, moons, length of day, and stellar type). There are also short sections on what space travel is like, time in the game, languages, and the cost of living.

The last eight pages of the Expanded Game Rules are useful for beginning referees. "How to Referee", "How to Create an Adventure," a sample adventure, and "Non-Player-Characters" all contain some basic advice and useful information. The section on NPCs also includes NPC reactions and wages.

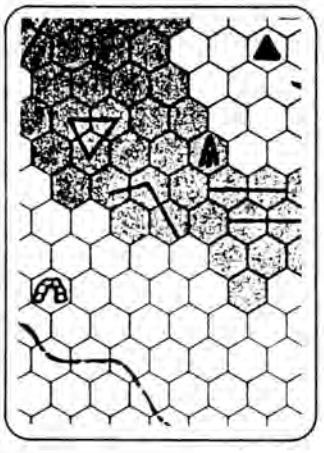
But wait, you may ask, what about sections on world creation, starship construction, commerce, or psionic abilities? There aren't any. For worlds to visit, the referee must rely on the generalities of the planetary data on pages 50 and 51 of the Extended Game Rules. For starships, the referee must work from the Starship Bridge Area Map, a design that is somewhat suspect (why are the engines and cargo holds located in the middle of the ship, and why are they so small?). Commerce? The referee will have to wing it. Same for psionics.

In short, there just isn't a whole lot to the rules. What is in the rules is mostly well done (the skills system, the combat procedure charts, the racial descriptions) and TSR has resisted the temptation to try to develop whole new rules systems for everything. Most of what is in the rules is similar to other games, so *Star Frontiers* represents a refinement of existing ideas. But given that most of the rules dwell on movement, combat, creatures, and equipment, it seems that the game really doesn't concern itself with much beyond beating alien nasties. The adventures in the Basic Rules are all combat situations, and the sample adventure in the Expanded Game Rules doesn't show much imagination but does require a lot of die rolls to let characters test their skills. Matching wits with detailed and intelligent NPCs? Suggested, but not seen so far.

All this criticism is borne out in playing the adventure enclosed with the game, "Crash on Volturnus." The players start on a starship, traveling to Volturnus in order to map the planet's surface, make friendly contact with any intelligent life-forms there, and to find out what happened to a previous expedition. While going to Volturnus, the starship is attacked by pirates, and the characters escape from the ship in a lifeboat, making a crash-landing on the planet. From there they travel across a desert, have some encounters, meet some aliens, travel through an underground dungeon — oops, excuse me, underground *caverns,* where they have to fight a variety of nasty and hostile life-forms, emerge to fight a monster as a way of joining the local alien culture, and then either (a) have the resolution of the adventure thrown at them by the referee or (b) run out and buy module SF-1 to complete the adventure. The whole adventure has the feel of a mediocre dungeon run, particularly when the characters wander in the caverns blundering into monsters (called creatures in this game).

Bad design work in the combat system becomes apparent while playing the adventure. When fighting pirates on board the starship, a player-character got shot twice by a pirate armed with an autopistol, got hit once (the pirate had only a 40% chance to hit at 2 meters) and only took two points of damage (the PC could take up to 60). An autopistol does 1D10 damage or 5D10 on burst, quite a spread in results. In fact, throughout the game it was impossible to kill anything on only one or two shots, due to both the low chance of hitting and to a damage system that makes clubbing someone with the gun as effective as shooting them with it (a club does 1D10 damage, one round from an autopistol, 1D10). Chances to hit are so low because, in the Expanded game, PCs use only half their Dexterity as a base chance to hit. Thus the average base chance to hit is about 20 to 25 percent. A character armed with an automatic rifle firing at point-blank range with an average Dexterity score of 50 with no particular skill level with the weapon (as a fair number of starting characters are) has a 15% chance to hit while firing at a man charging at him. This is too low. This is partly due to the fact that the modifiers list firing at a running target as a -10% without accounting for direction of motion (towards or away). The intelligent referee will have to change this. Range modifiers also reduce effectiveness. Point Blank has a range modifier of 0, Short -10%, Medium -20%, Long -40%, and Extreme -80% (the actual distance of these range categories differ by weapon). There are ways to improve a firer's chance to hit. One can accumulate XPs to gain a level of experience with weapons, thus getting +10%. One could also fire a burst. If our luckless autorifleman above had fired a burst (+20%) under the same circumstances, he now would have a 35% chance to hit, out to ten meters. At 40 meters, the maximum Short distance, his chance is 25%. This is without any intervening obstacles, please note. An autorifle on burst does 5D10, the average of which is about 27 or 28. An average human has a Stamina of 50. Thus it is most likely that five rounds from an autorifle fired at a man ten meters away will, if they hit, wound him badly, with a low chance of killing him. The rules do have provisions for automatic hits (a roll of 01-05 always hits) but more than this is needed.

At one point in the adventure, the players roll to see if their characters survive a lifeboat crash. First, each character has an outright 95% chance of escaping any injuries whatsoever. The amount of damage the luckless few will sustain varies from 1D10 to 5D10. As I indicated above with the autorifle example the average amount of damage one would take from a roll of 5D10 is going to be 27 or 28. The list of twelve suggested pre-rolled PCs in the



adventure rulesbook has three characters that can sustain up to the maximum 50 damage points without dying, and all twelve can take the average without being too put out. That's very impressive, considering that this lifeboat has plunged through a planet's atmosphere, out of control, on fire, and crashed "into a high outcropping of rock." (That's what it says on page eight.)

Maybe the designers decided that the players should not lose their PCs so soon in the game. But if violent death is going to be strongly implied but rarely supplied, whether through crashing lifeboats or weak weapons, where is the thin edge of danger *Star Frontiers*, or any other RPG, needs to force players to live by their wits, not relying on brute force but rather skill and imagination? Well, these rules discourage combat by making it last forever.

It would be easy to say that *Star Frontiers* is just *D&D* with lasers. It isn't exactly, but it's unlikely to make anyone drop their existing campaign to set up one for *Star Frontiers.* This game just doesn't have a solid science fiction feel to it. I shudder to think of articles in *The Dragon* on "Converting *D&D* Monsters to *Star Frontiers* Creatures." (Doing so would not be hard.) I also shudder when thinking of the possibility of the expensive hardbound *Advanced Star Frontiers Player's Handbook*, a *Referee's Guide*, etc. True, the game could use them. But why? TSR has a lot of money, talent, and resources with which to make a good game. Why did it disappoint us with *Star Frontiers?* □

GANGBUSTERS

by Mark Acres and Rick Krebs
TSR Hobbies
$12.00
Reviewed by Ken Rolston

This well-written, well-designed role-playing game is set in the era of gangsters and G-men. It contains a 64-page rulesbook, a 16-page programmed adventure, a two-sided full-color map of several city blocks complete with floor plans, a campaign map of a large city, die-cut cardboard counters, and two percentile dice. The product quality is very good; the art, graphics, and layout are quite attractive. The text itself is well-written; the language is simple and direct, with plenty of examples illustrating the mechanics and flow of play. The basic rules themselves are not revolutionary; they depend a great deal on the concepts already firmly established in the RPG tradition. The system emphasizes simplicity and fast pacing rather than the detail of simulation. Gunfights, fistfights, and car crashes, the main sources of action, are resolved with sufficient player options to be satisfyingfor gaming and drama while not complicated enough to slow play to a snail's pace. The text is lucid and readable.

The sections of the rules that deal with developing a *Gangbusters* campaign, particularly those dealing with the historical period, are interesting reading. *Gangbusters* characters choose careers in law enforcement, private investigation, crime reporting, and crime itself. The details of these careers are fascinating, particularly those concerning the criminal profitmaking operations. I never knew how to set up a numbers racket, or a bookmaking operation; this material was entertaining in its own right. The prospect of setting up a criminal empire gives an appreciation of how clever and ruthless a successful gangleader has to be. Of the possible careers for the good guys, the crime reporter's role is the most unusual; here a man with nothing but his wits and his pen sets out to challenge the considerable resources of a crime syndicate. As regards the roles of law officers – after years of playing in FRP games, it's interesting to contemplate the formality of obtaining evidence and search warrants when confronting nests of evil; and if the case isn't solid enough to convict a criminal, all the heroics may be in vain.

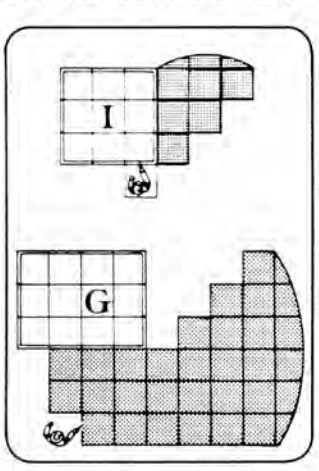
The resources for role-playing are fertile in the gangster genre: tough gunmen and shrewd bosses, crooked and honest politicians and cops, dames and molls, flatfoots and private eyes. "There are a million stories in the city," and the sleazy settings of cheap hotels, speakeasies, and betting parlors with their low-life denizens make a perfect background for action and intrigue. Most of us will draw our characters and narratives from the American gangster film genre; from the Public Enemies and Little Caesars, the Godfathers and Eliot Nesses, to the swarm of character actors who portrayed toughs, punks, whiners and stoolies, the gangster film has given us a multitude of roles to recreate in a game like *Gangbusters*. Currently the gangster genre is not flourishing; this may limit the interest of younger gamers less familiar with the literature and cinema of gangsters and G-men. In fact, *Gangbusters* should appeal the most to more mature college-aged gamers; the grim realism of the settings and more complex moral ambiguities of the historical period may not appeal to those who prefer clear good-and-evil issues and a confidence that good will triumph in the end. It is this realism that sets apart *Gangbusters* from the escapist, romantic worlds of fantasy and science-fiction RPGs. This is not to suggest that realism is preferable to romance, or that gangster gaming is necessarily less escapist than FRP gaming, but the distinction is an important component in *Gangbuster's* originality and appeal.

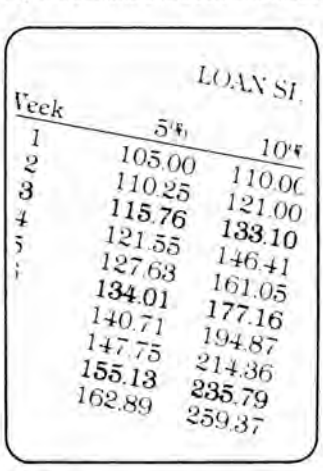
The programmed module that comes with the boxed set is a good idea; programmed adventures are an excellent way to permit a gamer to get used to the mechanics of the system while being introduced to the flavor of the game. I was a little disappointed with the module itself, " 'Mad Dog' Johnny Drake," not because it was not used as well as it might have been to reinforce and supplement the coverage of the mechanics in the rules booklet; on the contrary, at times the wording of the module caused me considerable trouble in following how the rules were being applied in a given case. Nonetheless, the programmed adventure did give me a chance to test my understanding of the rules, and helped me understand how a game session would be run. One very good idea is the form that is provided for recording the actions and decisions made as the gamer proceeds through the module; such forms would be helpful for all solo scenarios.

The maps provided with the game are colorful and attractive; the large map with floor plans of hotels, speakeasies, banks, book joints, warehouses, and other important establishments will greatly simplify the task of preparing scenarios. The cardboard counters are useful, though not particularly attractive; it is difficult to distinguish one figure or one car from another at a glance.

There are a few problems some gamers may have with this package. First, it is a city campaign set in a real historical period; cities in any role-playing game require a lot of work on the gamemaster's part, and any time there is an established social context for a campaign, the gamemaster must take on the responsibility of being knowledgeable about the period. This problem is compounded by the fact that the designer provided no list of fictional or historical references about the gangster era. Next, there is currently little popular interest in the days of the Prohibition and the Depression – science-fiction, fantasy, and comic book gaming certainly feeds off a considerable market for these genres in their print and media versions. Finally, the model of the "party of adventurers" that has been established in science fiction, fantasy, and superhero gaming is inappropriate for much of the action of *Gangbusters;* private detectives have always been solitary figures (who would think of the Thin Man or Sam Spade in a party of FRP characters?) and if players variously choose FBI agent, newspaper reporter, and criminal roles, it is hard to see how these divergent character types will be able to cooperate in a game session. At the very least, the *Gangbusters* campaign will have a very different style of play from a typical FRP campaign.

Gangbusters is nonetheless a worthwhile purchase, if only as a model of good game design.





Whether you buy it just to read the rules, or to develop a campaign, you will be pleased with your purchase of *Gangbusters.* The product is a credit to Mark Acres and the TSR design staff, and I hope we'll see more games of equal quality coming from them in the future. □

STARFLEET VOYAGES

by Michael Scott
Terra Games Co.
$16.95
Reviewed by Anders Swenson

Starfleet Voyages is a science-fiction adventure role-playing game of planetary exploration based on, but certainly not limited to, the *Star Trek* television series. The product comes in a 1" thick box containing a 74-page typewriter-set rulesbook, character and spaceship record sheets, templates for a starship combat game, and some errata sheets.

The rulesbook contains two rules sets; the adventures for individuals are covered in the adventure game rules called "The Landing Party," and the starship conflict rules are explained in the "Starflight" section.

"The Landing Party" contains rules for adventures by the starship crew who have left the spaceship to explore the surface of an unexplored and usually primitive planet. There are two phases to "The Landing Party," called the Basic and Advanced games. The Basic Game covers the mechanics of individual play — Character Generation, Learning — which means coming to understand new phenomena as they are presented by the Mission Master (*Starfleet Voyages* terminology for the GM), Psionics, Saving Rolls, the Transporter, Combat Rules, Movement, Hand-to-Hand and Ranged combat, Record-Keeping, and a simplified characteristic system for generating NPC monster stats. The section concludes with a basic equipment list and a scenario intended to be used with a set of pre-generated characters. These include the captain of a starship, his fellow bridge officers, and other crew members who have crash-landed their shuttle on a mysterious planet. They must devise a means of repairing their ship to take off again and rejoin their spaceship.

The Advanced Game begins with another scenario which has the intrepid crew members and officers investigate an ancient base of the long-gone Slaver empire. Unbeknownst to them the base is also being explored by a crew of hostile contemporary aliens. The scenario is followed by the supporting advanced rules, which begin with character generation rules for rolling up Federation Starfleet crew characters.

When generating a character a player rolls 3D6 for Strength, Dexterity, Luck, Mentality, Charisma, and Constitution. Size equals a height of 175cm modified by the roll of a D4 and a D10. Finally Movement is equal to 10m, modified up or down by Size, Strength, and the encumbrance of any equipment carried.

Individual combat in this game revolves around the modified roll of a six-sided die. In hand-to-hand fighting, each combatant rolls D6, adding or subtracting from the roll a number based on personal characteristics and combat skill to hit the enemy, who in turn rolls a similarly modified D6 in defense. Damage is equal to the remainder of the attack roll minus the defense roll, if it is positive. Ranged weapon combat is similar, with the attacker rolling a number based on dexterity to hit, and the defender rolling to dodge the shot.

Some non-human races and 1% of all humans and aliens have powers, which are treated in expanded detail. A given player-character, if psionic at all, might have one power, such as telepathy, precognition, or mind control.

The next section is a listing of Familiar Lifeforms, composed of intelligent species with many of them dangerous and hostile. The list is concluded with a set of randomly entered tables for the creation of new monsters with which to entertain the players.

The equipment listing is next containing variations on the devices already noted in the basic rules equipment section. There are a lot of weapons, some protective devices, and a few gadgets such as belt lights, chronometers, and advanced tricorders.

Starfleet life is described mostly in terms of division and ranks. The fleet is divided into Command, Sciences, and Services divisions — a character is usually assigned to one of these when a character rolls to find the starting rank for a new character. This rank may be anywhere from Technician III to Captain. Characters may have specific skills in the operation of a starship — there are 21 skills, ranging from military weaponry to operation of naval technical equipment. In a campaign, characters may study to improve existing skills or gain more advanced ones.

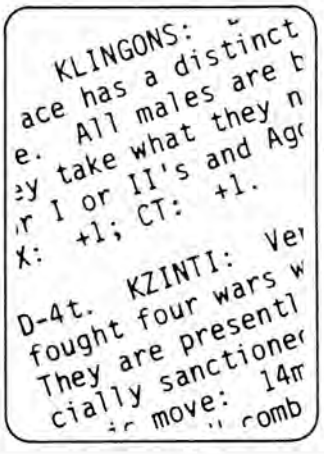
Finally, "The Landing Party" concludes with a more complete combat system that includes a large number of possible situational modifiers and an extensive weapons effects list. There is also a list of possible sources for further scenarios, and a bibliography of existing *Star Trek*-related book titles.

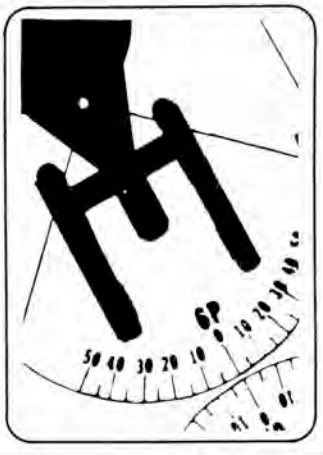
"Starflight" is a simple game of starship conflict. Since the "Landing Party" characters must travel to strange planets to have adventures, and since travel (not to mention many of the adventures) involve contact with potentially hostile nonhuman groups, these rules, or similar ones, are felt to be a necessary part of a space opera campaign. The gamemaster is expected to begin by generating a random star-map on graph paper, using three-dimensional coordinates. Given the map, the distances between all the different systems are calculated by the application of the Pythagorean Theorem, the type of star and number of planets and their type is rolled or assigned, and (I presume) one star is assigned as an advanced base for the exploring Federation ships.

Conflict occurs when the Federation ships meet those of a hostile non-human race. Each starfaring race may use only certain specific ship designs, and these are rated for power, speed capability, defensive screens, and weapons. The ship player must allocate the output of the ship's power source to those ship functions deemed most useful at the given moment. There is usually not enough power to move at top speed with full defensive screens while shooting every weapon on board. When warships shoot weapons, the players roll percentile dice and modify the results to determine damage. Damage varies with the type of weapon involved, and is assigned to specific systems on the target spaceships. There is no way for individual characters, no matter how well skilled, to influence the performance of their starship in a space battle.

Starfleet Voyages actually accomplishes what it sets out to do: it is a simple adventure game which mimics the action of the classic TV space operas like *Star Trek, Battlestar Galactica,* and such. The rules should be adequate to mimic the restricted plot elements found in the genre, and they might serve as the framework for an introductory adventure gaming campaign, especially among science-fiction buffs.

However, I did not find the rules particularly satisfying. I like my adventures set in a broader civilized context than the space navy, and I would certainly find the prospect of an endless series of planetary exploration scenarios to be dull. I also feel that the game mechanics are much too specialized toward combat and weapons use. There are many other science fiction games on the market that do a better job. ■





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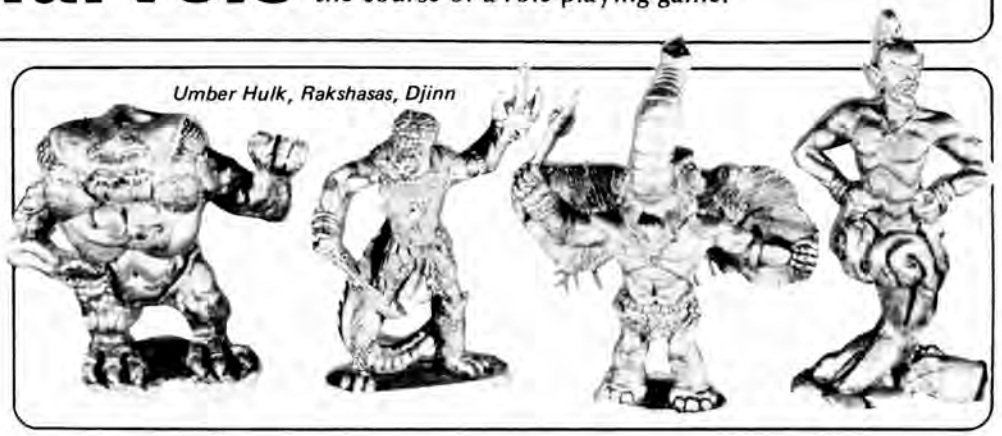
Metal Marvels

Miniature figures are used to represent the player- and non-player-character location and movement during the course of a role-playing game.

by John T. Sapienza, Jr.



Grenadier Models, Inc., has for the last couple of years been issuing figures in boxes of 10 and 20. They have now resumed issuing figures in blister packs, with some overlap with the boxed sets, but having some figures unique to the smaller packs, which each cost $3.95. Most of these figures were sculpted by Andrew Chernak.

Pack 101 contains two *Rakshasas,* beasts that can evidently take different shapes, judging from the two shown here. One is shown with the body of a man holding mace and shield, but the legs and head of an elephant. I suppose it's as easy to believe in as a minotaur. The other is shown with the body of a man holding a strange shortsword and a parrying dagger, but with the head, legs, and tail of a lizard. You could use this figure nicely with the lizardmen pack, in fact. They stand about 37mm from head to foot.

Pack 102 contains three *Bugbears,* large goblins with huge heads, standing about 32mm tall. Two carry shields and axes, while the third carries shield and sword and has a mace at his belt. All wear reinforced leather armor, plus armor on their right arms.

Pack 103 has five *Orcs,* all different. These are not ordinary saga orcs with their limited size and equipment. These are man-sized, averaging 27mm from head to foot, and wear half-plate for armor, a mixture of metal cuirass and chainmail. All but the orc with the 2H battleaxe wear metal helms; he wears a skull for a helmet. These orcs, incidentally, are of the simian type rather than the pig-face variety. The leader is kneeling with shield raised, his sword at waist height; I assume he is the leader because of his ornamented helm, though his position is not aggressive. The orc with hand axe stands with axe and shield ready for combat. The other orc with a sword stands with shield up and sword ready to thrust. The orc with 2H battleaxe is charging with axe up, ready to chop. These four orcs are also included in Box 2011, *Orcs Lair.* The remaining orc is unique to this blister pack, and stands with shield and mace ready for combat. This might serve as an orc cleric figure nicely.

Pack 104 contains four *Lizardmen,* two with 2H axes and two with 2H clubs with inset obsidian chips for blades. They wear alligator armor, and the lizardmen with axes also have small aligator hide shields fastened to their left arms. The lizardmen stand about 35mm tall.

Pack 105 includes *Djinn, Efreet, and Treasure.* The latter is part of the Grenadier policy of including pieces of treasure as fillers in packs, which is nice because treasure pieces are not readily available in lead. This djinn is very handsome indeed. He rises 60mm in the air from a swirl of clouds emerging from a bottle some kind soul has opened, though we only see him from the waist up. The efreet, unlike the djinn is rather an ugly devil with buck teeth. He also is seen only from the waist up, but the sculptor showed only a bit of fire below that and the figure is 35mm tall. The treasure consists of a pile of coins, from which a treasure chest sticks out with several bags along one side and with a crown resting on its top.

Pack 106 has two *Driders,* a sort of centaur with a human upper body and the lower body of a giant spider instead of a horse. The spider body is the same for each of the two driders in this pack and the one in Box 8002 (which has an upper body holding a crossbow). The upper body must be glued onto the main body. One of the two in this pack is armed with an atlatl and the other is armed with a throwing axe. Both are unarmored other than helmet and web-shaped shield, and both have swords slung over their backs. The spider bodies are 48mm long and 56mm wide, and the human bodies are about 28mm tall from head to foot.

Pack 107 is the *Umber Hulk and Xorn,* two monsters that lurk in the depths of the earth. The umber hulk has a heavy armored body with massive jaws. It stands 40mm from head to foot. The Xorn is a sort of earth elemental with three eyes, three arms, three legs, and has got to be one of the strangest critters in the book. It stands 26mm tall.

Pack 108 is *Goblins,* five different figures. These little fellows average about 20mm from head to foot, and are armored in a combination of chain and leather, with helmets cut to expose their charmingly large pointed ears. (Perhaps they are so heavily armed to avenge themselves on people who make ear jokes?) One has a shortsword and shield, one mace and shield, one a war hammer and shield, one a morningstar too big for him, and the last has a pole arm with a shield slung over his back in case he has to switch to sword and shield work. □

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Books and Gaming

Books reviewed here were selected for their detailed backgrounds and applicability to role-playing.

City of the Chasch, Servants of the Wankh, The Dirdir, **and** *The Pnume* **by Jack Vance, Daw SF, 1979, $1.75 each.**

Reviewed by Tony Watson

This quartet of science-fiction books comprises the "Tschai, Planet of Adventure" series. Jack Vance has always been noted for his exotic locales and bizarre cultures and beings and this series is no disappointment.

These four books, while perhaps not among his best works, abound with strange settings and odd aliens. The novels certainly live up to the "planet of adventure" subtitle. When reading them, I couldn't help but note what an excellent background for adventure gaming the stories provided. The world of Tschai and the adventures that occur on it beg to be translated into game form. In fact, were not the books first published in the late '60s, I would have thought Vance was chronicling the events of a well run, uniquely set role-playing campaign.

The adventure opens with a Terran survey starship orbiting the planet Tschai, from which a distress signal has been detected. A scout boat carrying two scouts is sent down to investigate. Subsequently, the survey craft is destroyed by a torpedo launched from the world s surface, and the scout boat is badly damaged. Only one of the scouts, Adam Reith, survives the ensuing wreck and the perusal of the crash site by two battling races of aliens, and a group of nomads, apparently of Earth-human stock. Reith falls in with the latter, the Emblem men who take their social status and demeanor from the symbols they wear. He is befriended by their boy-chief, Traz Onmale.

Thus begins a long series of incidents, travels, fights, captures, and escapes that take Reith across the length and breath of Tschai, as he seeks some means to get home. Traveling with him are Traz, and Anacho, a renegade Dirdirman who proves to be a good friend and an invaluable source of information about Tschai and its many cultures.

Tschai is a world inhabited by a number of alien and native species. The former include the reptilian Chasch (in Old, Blue and Green varieties), the Dirdir, a tall thin race of rapacious hunters, and the stolid, technological Wankh. All have come to Tschai at various times in its history, and now live in an uneasy stand off with one another. The native species include the Pnume, an underground dwelling, faintly insectoid people who devote much of their resources to recording the history of Tschai, and the mad, solitary Phung, who have an affinity for the planet's numerous ruined cities.

Humans of varying types, are also found on Tschai, brought there many thousands of years before from Earth by Dirdir raiders. Many of these humans are held in a sort of thralldom by the other races. All except the Phung have their own groups of humans, which have been assimilated into their cultures, assumed their viewpoints and have even begun to look like them. Thus Tschai is also populated by Dirdirmen, Chaschmen, Wankhmen and Pnumekin, all subjects of the respective "parent" species and carrying out their policies. They are also totally unaware of their Earthly origins and regard Reith's insistence on a planet of humans as heretical.

The cultures and technologies of each of the races is explored in as much detail as a fiction format allows. Because Reith has dealings with each of the four major races, and spends time in their cities (often not of his own volition), Vance is able to acquaint us with each of the cultures and races. We learn that the Chasch have poor eyesight but excellent olfactory capabilities, and love to trade their products for rare scents; they hold their Chaschmen in control by telling them they are the first stage of Chasch life and when they die they will be reborn as Chasch nymphs. Similarly, we learn of the tunnel cities of the Pnume and the purposes of the "Glass Box" in Hei, a Dirdir city. Besides the aliens and their corresponding submen, Vance introduces us to an array of human cultures, ranging from the savage marshmen (little more than neanderthals) to the refined and highly stylized Yaos of Cath.

In every case Vance provides interesting details about the way of life of the people in question, paying attention to such things as styles of dress, architecture, and cuisine. Of more immediate interest to prospective role-players are the modes of transportation, the weapons and the technologies available on Tschai. Three of the major races are alien, and thus capable of starflight, but Tschai is a curious mixture of the technologically advanced and the primitive. Transportation ranges from tall, multi-decked wagons pulled by giant, dinosaur-like beasts traveling in caravans to the anti-gravity, sky rafts of the Dirdir and Chasch. Sailing ships are a popular mode of travel as well. Tschai is a world of constant conflict, and the variety of weapons is wide. Swords, knives, and hand catapults (something like a crossbow) are common, especially among men. Energy weapons and the unique sandblast (which fires electrostatically charged particles of sand, accelerated almost to light-speed) are used by the more advanced races.

Vance also touches on the economics of Tschai. The coin of the realm, so to speak, is the sequin, a kind of crystal that comes in different colors, the hue denoting the value. Sequins grow underground only in a region called the Carrabas, which doubles as a Dirdir hunting ground. Fabulous riches are possible for the prospectors courageous and resourceful enough to venture in and return with a haul of sequins. Money can also be made in trade, either by ship or caravan; Vance provides examples of what trade goods are desired by which races and their approximate values. He also clues us in to everyday expenses, such as travel, meals, and clothing.

The potential for adventure on Tschai is rich. The Chasch, Dirdir, Pnume, Wankh and their submen are constantly scheming and sparring with one another, providing ample opportunity for intrigue and fighting. The wild beasts and tribes of men can serve to fill encounter tables and random events. Because of the violent nature of the world, things like kidnapings and caravan raids are the norm. Vance gives examples of the abduction of a young, beautiful Yao woman by a cult of priestesses, an attack on a caravan by Chasch warriors, battles with the Dirdir in the Carrabas and their hunting arenas, and a raid on a Wankh spaceport. All of these, plus much more material from the books could easily be translated into scenarios.

The ready adaptability of Vance's Tschai series to adventure gaming has already been noted. An eight page article, "Adventures

on Tschai" by Steve Winter and Forrest Johnson, appeared in *The Space Gamer* 40, June 1981. In this excellent piece, the authors provide encounter and event tables, information on the races inhabiting Tschai, and short sections on weapons, economics and scenarios. The two page map is better and more detailed than that included in the original Vance volumes. The authors have chosen to set their article up for the *Traveller* RPG system, but it can serve as basis for other game systems. There is of course no magic on Vance's Tschai so fantasy games, such as ***D&D, TFT, RuneQuest*** and the like may not adapt perfectly, but this shouldn't be too much or a problem. The general feel of the setting, the level of technology and the style of the adventures seem a bit closer to fantasy than science-fiction, though *Traveller, Space Opera* and *Star Frontiers* would certainly not be inappropriate. Tschai is such a well sculpted world for adventure that perhaps the best appproach would be to design an original RPG around it, but until that time enterprising and imaginative gamemasters should find many good ideas in Jack Vance's Tschai books. □

Frostflower and Thorn, Berkeley, 1980, *Frostflower and Windbourne*, Berkeley, 1982, both by Phyllis Ann Karr.

Reviewed by David Dunham

Most fantasy stories assume that the general populace can tolerate magicians. They may not like them and often fear their powers, but at least their negative attitude is passive. Phyllis Ann Karr's Frostflower books portray a society that actively hates magicians.

The Tanglelands, where the stories take place, are ruled by a caste of farmer-priests. The farmers worship a variety of gods, many of them connected with fertility. The common folk follow the teachings of the priests, believing that if they stray, they are in danger of spending the afterlife in the Hellbog (the worse your life the deeper you end up), tortured by demons.

The sorcerers, on the other hand, are monotheistic. This, plus their sorcerous powers sets them apart from the rest of society, to live in mountain retreats where they are free to practice their unusual customs. They live by a set of vows, and lose their powers if these are broken. Sorcerers must always tell the truth, and can't harm anyone. They are vegetarians, and must retain their virginity. In exchange, sorcerers have three powers. They can manipulate time by speeding it up or slowing it down, control weather (a sorcerer can "catch the lightning, and aim it"), and "free travel," a form of astral projection in which the sorcerer's mind can wander around while the body remains in a trance.

These abilities may seem overly powerful, but in fact they are not. Sorcerers are constrained by their vows. If a sorcerer uses his powers to harm another, he loses them. Secondly, they are of limited application. Sorcerers can speed up or slow down time, but only in a single entity, and they can't reverse it. Anyone who experiences accelerated time will lose an equivalent amount from the end of his life, unless put into the trance of cool breathing to adjust the balance. A sorceress can only call lightning if there are clouds available, and the free-traveling entity moves only at a walking pace. Though it can pass through walls, it cannot fly, and must follow the ground.

On the other hand, the sorcerer's abilities can be extremely handy, if used cleverly. A sorcerer can carry a small bag of seeds, and grow fruit whenever he' s hungry. In *Frostflower and Windbourne,* the sorcerer Windbourne used his weather control to find a secret door in the dark, by listening for the distinctive sound as the wind passed over the irregularity. Sorcerers can escape a prison by accelerating the decay of the lock, or by speeding up the growth of a plant whose roots can crack the walls.

As I already mentioned, the common folk fear and hate the sorcerers. In part, this is caused by the sorcerers themselves, to cultivate the people's fear in order to protect themselves: noone would want to hurt a sorceress who (so they think) could put wasps in their stomach. The farmers also encourage this hatred, occasionally using the sorcerers as convenient scapegoats. Sorcerers are made to wear distinctive black robes when traveling around the Tanglelands. As a result, few people will deal with them, and their lives are often in danger. Since their touch can age, captured sorcerers are treated carefully. They can only be held in copper manacles (sorcerers can rust iron with their time control), leading many superstitious folk to protect themselves against magic by wearing copper bracelets.

The commoners ("farmers' folk"), sorcerers, and farmer-priests live in a well drawn world. Ms Karr has presented a complete society, similar in some regards to medieval Europe, subtly different in others. The farmers are in control of society. They instill fear into the commoners, and can make them do nearly anything simply by threatening of an afterlife in the Hellbog. Only farmers are privileged to ride horses.

All warriors are women, men's lives are too important. It is a worse crime to kill a man than a woman. Criminals (including sorcerers) are usually punished by forcing them to eat sharp stones, and then hanging them by the arms until they perish. Time is measured not in weeks but in henhatchings and short periods (such as in cooking) are estimated by singing a song.

Little touches like this make the world seem real, and the place names also seem earthy and true. You can bet that towns like All Roads West, Three Bridges, and West-of-the-Marsh will appear in my campaign.

The story of *Frostflower and Thorn* is about a warrior named Thorn who discovers she is pregnant. Not wishing the inconvenience of a child (and the loss of employment during pregnancy), she starts to look for an aborter, but instead meets Frostflower, a sorceress who offers to help, in return for the child. By speeding up the process, Frostflower solves Thorn's problem in an afternoon, but now she has her own problem. Anyone who sees a sorceress with a baby will suspect that she stole it (it couldn't be her own, after all), so she hires Thorn for protection and starts her return to Windslope Retreat. Her troubles begin when she inadvertently witnesses one of the farmers' rites. The farmer at first wishes to purify her, but when he sees the child, he is convinced that she stole it, and tries to take it from her. Thorn rescues the two, and for the rest of the book they are fugitives, in and out of the hands of the farmers.

I really enjoyed this book. The two main characters were delightful counterpoint for each other. Thorn is rough, worldly, and cynical, but hilariously naive about child raising. Frostflower is gentle and innocent, but has inner strength. Both women grow over the course of the book. And not only are the background and characters engrossing, but the pacing was excellent, ranging from light moments to gripping tension.

Frostflower and Windbourne opens with Thorn rescuing a sorcerer condemned for the death of a priest, and bringing him to the refuge of Windslope. There, Thorn reveals that she thinks the priest was poisoned, and the only way to clear herself of her crime of aiding a sorcerer's escape is to establish Windbourne's innocence. Frostflower, who has recently learned the skill of free traveling, volunteers to help. Windbourne, eager to perform penance for the lie of disguising himself to reach refuge, is equally interested in proving his innocence, so the three set out, accompanied by a dog and cat.

The death of the priest has provoked a power struggle between two other farmers, so the magicians aren't the only ones wishing to learn the truth. Meanwhile, the townmaster of Five Roads Crossing, from whose custody Windbourne escaped, tries to maintain a careful neutrality.

Although this book had an interesting mystery, and further developed the Tanglelands (introducing townmasters as another force besides the farmers, for example), it was not as good as its predecessor. The three main characters do not play off each other as well as the two did. Parts of the plot were too obviously foreshadowed, and most of the tension of the flight from the farmers was missing.

I enjoyed both these books for the background, and *Frostflower and Thorn* for its characters and story. I'm looking forward to the next in this series. □

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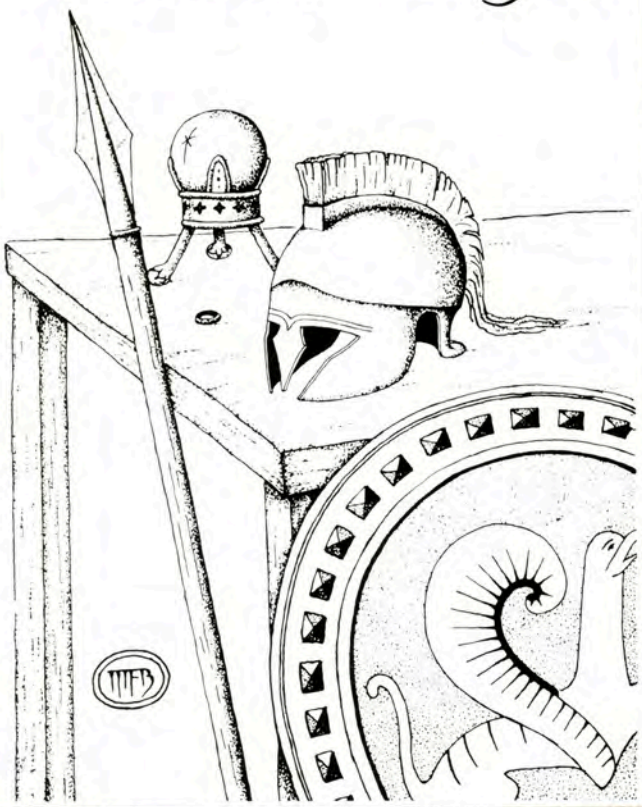

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Quick Plugs

This section announces new products of interest to our readers. Publishers are invited to send in samples of their new releases to be plugged in this column.

STAR TREK – Comes boxed with a 128-page rulesbook, 56-page adventure book, 80 pages of deck plans, 22"x34" hex map, 112 counters, and a pair of twenty-sided dice. Designed by Fantasimulations Associates, this is a science fiction role-playing game based on the popular TV and movie series. The game involves character generation, alien races, skills, combat, medical aid, equipment, shipboard systems, adventures, encounters, etc. Available for $25 from FASA, PO Box 6930, Chicago IL 60680, add $1.50 for shipping, residents add sales tax.

ESPIONAGE – This is a secret agent role-playing game designed by George MacDonald and Steve Peterson. Components are boxed with a 64-page rulesbook, a 16-page scenario book, and three six-sided dice. Rules involve character generation, skills, character disadvantages, equipment packages, combat, perception, concealment, vehicles, campaign and player notes. It is priced at $12.95 and is available from Hero Games, 92-A 21st Ave, San Mateo CA 94402.

DROIDS – This 80-page book is a cybernetic role-playing game. Designed by Neil Moore, the game involves droid construction with transport units, manipulators, power packs, sensors, communication modules, weapons, and armor. Besides scenarios the book also includes rules for combat, organized societies, encounters, and weather. Available for $7.95 from Integral Games, PO Box 13562, Arlington TX 76013.

FOR TRAVELLER

Traveller – This is a new starter edition that comes boxed with a 64-page rulesbook, a 24-page book of charts and tables, 16-page scenario book, play aids, and a pair of six-sided dice. Retailing for $10, the books are in 8½"x11" format. From Game Designers' Workshop, PO Box 1646, Bloomington IL 61701.

FOR CALL OF CTHULHU

The Arkham Evil – Designed by John Diaper, et al, this 64-page book describes an adventure in three acts. Yet another chapter in the struggle of the Outer Gods to enter and ravage our unsuspecting world, the investigators begin their adventure in an isolated mining town in the Appalachian Mountains where they discover a diabolical plot. Available for $8 from TOME, 2706 Hamilton Dr, Kirkwood NJ 08043, NJ residents add 6% tax.

FOR THIEVES' GUILD

Thieves Guild 7 – This 48-page book contains rules for inborn advantages and disadvantages, locks and traps, a cat-burglary scenario, and an armed robbery adventure. Designed by Kerry Lloyd, et al, it is available from Gamelords, 18616 Grosbeak Ter, Gaithersburg MD 20879.

FOR MECHANOID INVASION

Homeworld – This 96-page book is designed by Kevin Siembieda and describes the Mechanoids' demise, Homeworld expeditions, alien races, alignments, insanity, psionics, starships, armor, weapons, vehicles, and descriptions and encounter tables for Homeworld. Available for $7.50 from Palladium Books, 5669 Casper Ave, Detroit MI 48210.

FOR D&D EXPERT SET

Curse of Xanathon – This 32-page scenario by Douglas Niles is for character levels 5-7. It describes town and wilderness adventures in a series of five detective-type scenarios. The adventurers must unravel the dark mystery that plagues the town of Rhoona by skulking through the barracks, visiting the temple of chaos, journeying to a shrine, dueling with the high priest, and rescuing the duke. Published by TSR Hobbies.

FOR BOOT HILL

Ballots and Bullets – This 32-page module recreates a wild west political campaign. Designed by David Richie, it has over 200 places and 300 non-player-characters in a town, and provides extensive campaign rules. It also describes how to scare off opposition voters, handle loud-mouthed hecklers, hold political rallies, stuff the ballot box, and much more. Also included are seven scenarios that can take place in the town. Published by TSR Hobbies and available in most hobby stores.

FOR HIGH FANTASY

The following five items are all available from Reston Publishing, 11480 Sunset Hls Rd, Reston VA 22090. They are all designed by Jeffrey Dillow. **In the Service of Saena Sephar** – This is a 162-page solo adventure book. The primary mission is to find and disarm a bomb-like device before time runs out. There is a special system for keeping track of time. It retails for $10.95. **Murder in Irliss** – This is a 145-page solo adventure book. The object is to find out who killed the prince and tell the king who you suspect. It may be played more than once as the murderer changes from game to game. It sells for $10.95. **Wizards and Warriors** – This hardcover book contains both the previous two books and sells for $14.95. **Goldchester** – This 245-page book contains a description of the town of Goldchester and four scenarios. Twenty-seven sites in Goldchester are described including a list of possibble occurrences. The four scenarios involve a castle with 41 areas to explore, a 14-level quest to conquer a kingdom, a temple with 13 scenes, and a dangerous canyon with an imprisoned dragon. Retail price is $13.95. **Judges Screen** – This is a 25"x9" screen with charts and tables. Also included are 25 character sheets. It is priced at $7.95.

FOR TUNNELS & TROLLS

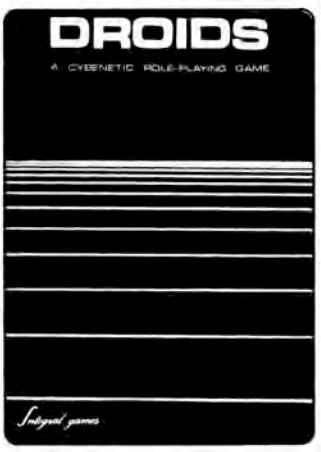
Agent of Death – This is a 16-page solitaire dungeon in a 11½"x15" newspaper format. Designed by Ken St. Andre, it contains three short solos that can be played individually or as a whole. It sells for $3.95 and contains 290 numbered paragraphs. From Infinity Limited, 1425 S 320 E, Orem UT 84057.

FOR MORROW PROJECT

Personal and Vehicular Basic Loads and the Morrow Project Role-Playing Expansion – Contains an eight-page booklet and 48 pages of loose-leaf material. Designed by H. N. Voss, this package includes a discussion of what the *Morrow Project's* objectives as a role-playing game are. It also includes a new skills system as well as personal and vehicular weapons and ammo stats, character sheets, and a body hit location table. Available for $6.95 from Timeline, 3588 Bald Mtn Rd, Pontiac MI 48057.

FOR RUNEQUEST

RuneQuest Companion – This is a 72-page collection of articles for *RuneQuest*. Includes an article on the Holy Country, a solo scenario, and material from out of print *Wyrms Footnotes*. Published by Chaosium, PO Box 6302, Albany CA 94706, available for $8 plus $2 for shipping, CA residents add appropriate sales tax. **Pavis** – This boxed set contains a 40-page common knowledge book for the players, a 40-page city guide for the gamemaster, a 64-page episodes book of scenarios, a 22"x34" map of Pavis, and an 11"x34" map of the River of Cradles. It describes a desert city in a river valley. The episodes book contains three scenarios: an introduc-



tion to the city, a burglary, and a four-part adventure to protect a giant baby cradle floating down a river. Published by Chaosium, it retails for $8.

FOR ANY SYSTEM

Umbar — This 52-page book describes an oligarchy on the western coast of Tolkien's Middle Earth. Comes with a 22"x17" map, the rules cover its political structure, economy, city guard, religion, ships, a typical village, etc. Designed by Brenda Spielman. Available for $10 postpaid from Iron Crown Enterprises, PO Box 1605, Charlottesville, VA 22902.

Chilling Chambers — This is 26 pages of loose-leaf material with two 11"x17" room plans. It describes ten rooms ranging from a barracks, to a laboratory. Edited by John Wheeler. Available for $5 from The Companions, 245 Water St, Bath, ME 04530.

Alluring Alcoves — This is more of the same as *Chilling Chambers*. It has 28 pages of loose-leaf material as well as the room plans. This set has a cell, a chapel, a crypt, etc., as well as more traps, poisons, and monsters. Available for $5 from The Companions. □

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Sword of Hollywood

Larry DiTillio brings you behind-the-scenes news about upcoming films and TV shows of interest.

The promised interview with Chris Gore, the screenwriter who penned the script for the *RuneQuest* movie has been delayed. Hopefully, I will have it for you in the next issue.

BOGIE'S BACK – Or at least *The Man with Bogart's Face.* Robert Sacchi, who starred in the aforementioned flick, has a new television series currently kicking around the marketplace. It is called *DAPS: Private Investigator* and is predictably about a modern day gumshoe who solves crimes ala Bogie. I always liked Bogart and I also like Sacchi, so I'm looking forward to see this obvious rip-off in action. My best guess for its appearance is summer or fall of this year. If nothing else, it may provide ideas for the current phletora of modern day RPG's on the market.

SHERLOCK'S BACK TOO – Or is he? Well, partly. A BBC-produced mini series called *The Baker Street Boys* is now available for sale to local TV stations. Those of you who are avid Holmes fans know that the Baker Street Irregulars were a salty bunch of urchins who helped the great man gather facts to solve his cases. The series concentrates on them, but also provides some exquisite views of Victorian England complete with hansom cabs on cobbled streets, pubs and music halls. I know it is not much help for your *RuneQuest* game, but it might help your *Timeship* campaign or make a good setting for a *Call of Cthulhu* adventure.

SPEAKING OF CTHULHU – Soon to be released is *Claws,* a spine-tingling chiller set in the 1920's. It stars Jason Robards and is about this lonely farm where a chain of bizarre events occurs. This is scary stuff!

COMIC BOOK SPECIALS – Five of them to be exact. These are half-hour specials called collectively *Cosmic Code.* They star Captain Universe and other animated favorites from mighty Marvel Comics. I know you *Champions* players will be eagerly watching, not to mention players of *V&V, Supergame, Superworld* and other bam-crash-pow games. Marvel is co-producing the series with Metromedia and I would suggest paying close attention because Marvel is very active in television and film right now. I'm a longtime Merry Marvelite, and to me this is great news indeed.

AND WHO? – Yes, Who. *Dr. Who,* that is. I am sure there are at least a dozen Who fans reading this column and wondering when they might see their favorite time-traveling doctor on American television. Well, take heart because 78 episodes of *Dr. Who* are now up for syndication to U.S. stations. These episodes feature Peter Davison, the fifth person to play Dr. Who (and the current star of the series in England).

3-D HORROR – If you live in a civilized area like Los Angeles, San Francisco or New York you have probably caught one or more 3-D horror flicks on your tiny tube in the past year. These include real turkeys like *Bride of the Gorilla* or *The Mad Magician.* Well, look to your blue-and-red glasses once again folks, because up for grabs right at this moment is a nifty piece of three-dimensional magic called *The Mask.* I saw *The Mask* when I was but a munchkin and it was good! Only selected parts are in three dimensions. In these parts, the hero, a Cthulhu-type professor dons a strange South American tribal mask and has mind-bending hallucinations. Before the movie you got a paper replica of The Mask with the 3-D glasses built in, and a voice on the screen would say "Put the mask on now!" at the appropriate times. That told you that you were about to be scared out of your tiny little bejabbers, so if you were a squeamish type you could hide . . . The film is being sold to television in a package that includes a 20-minute featurette called *Mystic Magic* starring illusionist Harry Blackstone Jr. This featurette is also in 3-D and supposedly maximizes the depth for television viewing. Watch your local listings this summer and catch this program.

WIZARDS AND WARRIORS – In February a live action sword & sorcery show called *Wizards & Warriors* made its debut on the CBS network. I missed it. I missed the second one. So sue me, I love to party on Saturday night. However, I saw the third episode and I was delighted. *Wizards & Warriors* perfectly captures the odd mix of 20th-century savvy in a medieval setting that constitutes the spirit of fantasy role-playing. Its characters, Prince Greystone and his faithful companion Marko on the side of good; the nasty wizard Vector and the obnoxious Prince Blackpool on the side of evil, all play it with just the right touch of tongue-in-cheek and surprisingly it all works. For example: when confronted with a ceiling full of sharp, saw-toothed blades rapidly descending on them, Prince Greystone and Marko try every trick in the book; search for secret doors, hit the ceiling with the magic sword, and try to pry it with a magic dagger. Nothing works, so Marko turns to the Prince, as the ceiling gets closer and closer, "Do you mind if I scream?", he asks. "Just as long as you don't do it in my ear," replies the Prince. Marko screams. The Prince looks at him. The ceiling is about an inch from their prone bodies. "I think I'll scream too," he says, "It helps relieve the tension." Wonderful. I could almost hear the dice rolling and see bleary-eyed players toughing it out in the face of a fiendish GM trick. If subsequent episodes are as good, I'l be an ardent *Wizards & Warriors* fan. Be warned, if you take fantasy gaming as seriously as nuclear war then you won't like it. The rest of you will love it. So watch and maybe it'll stay on the air more than a few weeks.

WARGAMES ARE HERE – On June 3rd, a movie called *Wargames* will be released in the United States. The movie concerns a high school student who inadvertently hooks his computer into a U.S. Defense Command Center. Some idea, eh? *Wargames* is an action-adventure directed by John Badham who recently gave us *Blue Thunder,* a somewhat mindless mish-mash of high-tech violence. I enjoyed *Blue Thunder* for its well done action, despite its plot flaws, so lets see what happens with *Wargames.*

RAY BRADBURY ON HBO – Home Box Office and Wilcox Productions Inc. are developing *The Bradbury Chronicles,* adaptations of short stories by author Ray Bradbury for cable TV. Ray himself will write the scripts, and the series will go into production as soon as Mr. Bradbury okays the initial pilot. It's nice to see a writer getting some control over his work, a situation which is as rare as feathers on a dragon.

ROAD WARRIOR CLONES – The success of the gut-busting *Road Warrior* has unfortunately spawned an entire bevy of cheapo imitations, which are probably best avoided. There are some of the titles: *Warrior of the Lost World, 2020 – Texas Gladiators, Endgame* and *1990: The Bronx Warriors.* All are post-holocaust, punked-out smash-em-ups.

FROM THE PAST – A few issues back I recommended a film called *Galaxy of Terror,* I am now touting a film called *Die, Moster, Die,* so that you won't accuse me of being inconsistent in my low tastes. *Die, Monster, Die* stars Boris Karloff and Nick Adams in a not-too-faithful adaptation of the H.P. Lovecraft tale *The Colour Out of Space.* The picture has excellent production values, but falls far short of the mark when depicting the Lovecraftian mythos, as do most of the attempts to put Lovecraft on celluloid. But, fans, there are some nifty scenes in *Die, Monster, Die,* particularly the scene when Nick Adams finally goes through that door he's not supposed to go through and comes face to face with one of the most disgusting collections of mutated thingies anyone has ever seen. It's Sanity rolls for everyone, and excellent material for the *CoC* Keeper. *Die, Monster, Die* usually haunts the tube about 1:30 in the morning, so you have to be a diehard to catch it, but by all means do so. It has just enough to keep you engrossed and not enough to totally turn you off. I guarantee you'll start writing stats for *CoC* after the last scene, so keep a pencil and paper handy.

I feel compelled to make one thing dark crystal clear. Next door to this column there is usually a film review, plainly marked "Reviewed by John Nubbin." At various cons, people have come up to me and said "Hey I loved/hated your review of *Conan.*" Well I am not John Nubbin, and I don't even know John Nubbin. I do not review films for *DW,* I pass on news about film and TV, and occasionally pronounce something to be dismal or great (which is not reviewing, it's opinionating). John deserves credit for his writing and I don't.

If I can get two seconds away from writing animation scripts and finishing up my *Call of Cthulhu* campaign for the house of Chaos, I promise I'll try to nail Chris Gore to the wall and get you all the info I can on the *RQ* movie. Meanwhile keep on gaming and lining up at the box office.□

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Film Review

This column reviews movies containing subject matter of interest to role-playing gamers. Films are often good sources for scenarios, gadgets new monsters, and other ideas.

RETURN OF THE JEDI

Producer . . . . . George Lucas
Director . . . Richard Marquand
Screenplay . . Lawrence Kasdan
. . . . . George Lucas
Photography . . . . . Alan Hume
Music . . . . . John Williams

CAST

Luke Skywalker . . Mark Hamill
Han Solo . . . . . Harrison Ford
Princess Leia . . . . Carrie Fisher
Lando Calrissian . . . . . Billy Dee Williams
C-3PO . . . . Anthony Daniels
Chewbacca . . . Peter Mayhew
Anakin Skywalker . . . . . Sebastian Shaw
Emperor . . . . Ian McDiarmid
Yoda . . . . . Frank Oz
Darth Vader . . . David Prowse
Obi-Wan Kenobi . . . . . Alec Guinness
R2-D2 . . . . . Kenny Baker

Reviewed by John Nubbin

Yep. It's back. ***Star Wars.*** The only thing everyone talked about from May 1st to 25th was about 'how *good* it's going to be.' Well, now it is after May 25th, and people have seen it, and nobody has much to say, because disappointment in ***Return of the Jedi*** is about as high as it was for ***Star Trek: The Motion Picture,*** and that is saying a lot.

Briefly told, the movie sounds like it should be as enjoyable as the others. The Empire is building another Death Star. Luke and his friends go back to Tatooine to rescue Han Solo (which throws 'the rebellion is more important than any one man' theory out the window, when the rebellion's political leader, only Jedi, and best general can flit off on dangerous wild goose chases), do this with ease, come back and launch their attack on the new death star, as well as the Emperor and his slave, Lord Vader.

Sounds great? Just what you were waiting for, action, adventure, romance. This is it, the one that tells us who Leia will pick, who 'the other' is, what will happen between Luke and Vader, whether or not Vader is Luke's father, and so on. Since this is the last one in the series, it has to tie up all the loose ends — and it does. By the end of the film, you will have your every question answered, and you will care about ***Star Wars*** as much as you will about the re-release of ***Stella Star*** or ***The Deadly Spawn II.*** Impossible as it is to imagine, ***Return of the Jedi*** is not what you have been hoping it would be. What had the possibility of topping off the most famous film trilogy in the history of cinema is in reality an overbearingly cute, sappy and predictable farce which moves across the screen like a quickly produced two month cheapie rather than the extravaganza it should be.

A paragraph like the last does call for clarification. ***Jedi*** is not a bad movie. It is just not good enough to be the sequel to ***The Empire Strikes Back. Star Wars*** came out at a time when serious science fiction and serious action adventure films were laughed off the screen. The impact of ***Star Wars*** on audiences throughout the entire world did not go unheeded; rip-off films abounded the next year, and every year after that. A lot of quality science fiction and fantasy films were produced as well, pictures which would have never been made had ***Star Wars*** never made its impact.

But no matter what else came out, everyone wanted to know what would come next from George Lucas. The next product was the much more adult and sophisticated ***The Empire Strikes Back.*** Letting the characters and the storyline grow up more than a little, Lucas proved his saga, set long ago and far away, was solid enough to incorporate heavier tones and relationships than most were willing to give it credit for.

Unfortunately, for those of us who wanted to see more of this intelligent treatment of these characters who have come to mean so much to the world, ***Return of the Jedi*** does not deliver. Overly cute, merchandise conscious, and misdirected to the point of flatness, the new ***Star Wars*** film moves in quirks, with many slow periods boring the audience into restlessness.

I am not of the school that believes you have to be a science fiction director to direct science fiction. I do believe, however, that you have to be a good director to direct well. Richard Marquand's credits before ***Jedi*** are not impressive (British TV, which most of us don't get to see much of, and the highly forgettable films, ***The Legacy*** and ***Eye of the Needle***), neither is what he did with ***Jedi.***

Most of the acting in ***Jedi*** falls below the levels of the first two features. Poor deliveries, coupled with an incredible amount of bad shot choices make most of the acting scenes (as opposed to the special effect scenes) unbearably flat. These are things to lay at a director's feet.

These are not the only faults. The plot itself is filled with cute, cloying pitfalls, enough to have snared even Irvin Kershner. The unbelievably cute teddy bear aliens who make up most of the last third of the film, Chewbacca's swinging-on-a-vine-doing-a-Tarzan-yell scene, the outworld frog snatching its dinner outside of Jabba's fortress, the tough-looker who cries his heart out when Luke kills the local monster, et cetera, do not ring true with the harsh, bitter realities of ***Empire.*** Nor do they, when placed against that film's intensity, seem to have any place in the ***Star Wars*** series.

Direction and writing are not the only things missing this time around. It is easy to level blame at a new, inexperienced director, or to wish for Leigh Brackett's much missed maturity in the screenplay, but the same folks at Lucas Studios did the special effects, although in some ways it is hard to prove. Maybe in the hopes of startling everyone all over again, I, L & M bit off more than they could chew, but the results are that the special effects are flawed throughout. Wires and matt lines show, the aliens look more plastic than other-worldly, and when all is said and done, things do not look as good as they did in ***Star Wars,*** let alone ***Empire.***

To top it off, the audience is treated to over half a hundred new space ships and characters, none of them advancing the plot. As sad as it makes one to say it, the suspicion arises that the abundance of new uniforms and machinery are merchandise-inspired more than they are plot related.

When the movie is running through its action paces, it moves fairly well. It is hard to fault some of the action sequences. But this is one of the nice phrases that movie reviewers have developed since ***Star Wars*** came out for those movies trying to be ***Star Wars*** which just weren't up to par. The ***Return of the Jedi,*** as much as it saddens me to say it, is one of those films. □

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A Letter from Gigi

Behind-the-scenes gossip about the role-playing fans and the industry by our knowledgeable personality, Gigi D'Arn.

Dear Tadashi,

Clause 23 in the contract for GENCON exhibit space states that the convention management (TSR Hobbies) has the right to take possession and destroy any materials making unauthorized use of the trademark *Dungeons & Dragons* or any other trademark of TSR Hobbies that appears at the convention. Because of this clause, there are many companies that are planning not to attend. Is the convention management willing to protect other trademarks? "The cause" continues.

Grenadier's *Call of Cthulhu* plans for ORIGINS include a miniature figure of Cthulhu himself, appropriately awesome and indomitable.

It seems Grenadier will not be doing *Traveller* miniatures after all; they claim they didn't get all the molds from Martian Metals. Who now?

I heard Martian Metals was insured for their "Forest fire." I do not think, however, they will get back into the business of producing miniatures. Their phone is disconnected and not in service. Anybody have their last number?

No more nipples: I hear Avalon Hill will not have naked breasts on their *Perils & Plunder* game after all. Rumour overheard at a diner had it that they were the idea of that certain dirty old gentleman, but the marketing department didn't approve.

How about *Thieves' Guild 7* as the worst cover of the year?

Good news for fans of the "man with the hat," TIM KASK is back and reports that *Adventure Gaming* is coming back on a monthly schedule and is here to stay. Double good news for fans of "Finieous Fingers."

The convention organizers on the east coast have finally gotten together. The EASTCON and ATLANTICON people will jointly hold EASTCON in New Jersey this year during June 24-26.

I may get into trouble for this but remember this is only a joke. It is one that has been floating around game cons for about half a year now. A gamer went to heaven and there he joined a role-playing game session. The gamemaster looked awfully familiar so he asked one of the regulars who the person with the beard and glasses was. "Oh it's only god," came the reply "he likes to play GARY GYGAX."

Can it be true? Gamescience will have M.A.R. Barker's first volume of *Tekumel* out this May with the second volume due out in July? I'll believe it when I see them.

Game Designer's Workshop announces the next adventure for *Traveller*, to be *Nomads of the World Ocean*. Designed by WILLIAM and ANDREW KEITH, it will describe an adventure on a waterworld. MARC MILLER's *The Traveller Adventure* is being prepared for release this summer. Their *Traveller Starter Set* won the Hobby Industry Association's Creative Excellence Award at the 1983 tradeshow in Anaheim.

JOHN BUTTERFIELD has left Victory Games to work for Coleco. He and wife Trish are expecting their first child in July.

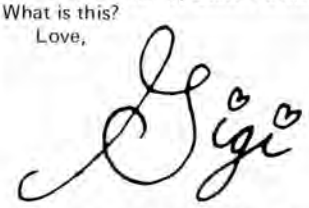
Chaosium announced the next *Call of Cthulhu* scenario book will be out in June. Edited by SANDY PETERSEN, it will be titled either the *Asylum*, or *Fragments of Fear*, or neither of the above. You never know with game designers.

Congratulations to T.O.M.E.: they sold out of their first print run (1000) of *Arkham Evil*, a *Call of Cthulhu* scenario book in less than a month. I better make sure I don't miss a copy of their *Dunwich Horror*.

We now know who won the license war to do a game based on Marvel's superheroes. It is TSR. Apparently both companies obtained licensing rights of one type or another, with Marvel gaining the rights to use *D&D* for their animated cartoon division, and TSR gaining the rights to do the Marvel superhero role-playing game. At one time the following companies were interested in the Marvel game: Ideal, Mayfair Games, Steve Jackson Games, Fantasy Games Unlimited, Hero Games, Chaosium, and Avalon Hill.

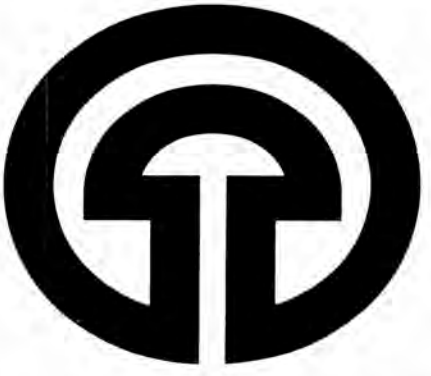
An old lover of mine traveling in Sweden said he saw a game there called *D&D (Dragons and Demons)* written by Steve Perrin! What is this?

Love,



Opinions expressed in this column are those of Gigi D'Arn and do not reflect those of Tadashi Ehara or the staff of *Different Worlds* magazine, nor those of the good folk at Chaosium. Correspondences to Miss D'Arn should be addressed to: Gigi D'Arn, c/o *Different Worlds*, PO Box 6302, Albany CA 94706-0302. Miss D'Arn will not be able to make any personal relies but promises to read gossip on just about anything dealing directly or indirectly with this hobby. □

cartoon by Alexis Gilliland



Rejected Game Designers' Guild logo designed by Redmond Simonsen. *"It's a mushroom." "It's obscene!"*

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